THE ISKANDARNAMA: AN ANALYSIS OF AN ANONYMOUS MEDIEVAL PERSIAN PROSE ROMANCE

by

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To my late mother, Stella, and to Sara

ای یاد تو موس روانم،　　جز نام تو نیست بر زبانم

(O your memory, sweetens my soul,
there is nothing but your name on my tongue.

Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Khusraw and Shīrīn, v.2)*

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Signature: _____ Date: 7/8/2006

Abstract of thesis

Alexander is the hero of numerous legends and his life has been adjusted to the needs of each era and region. Of all peoples, the Iranians were those whose glorious empire was conquered by Alexander.

The Muslim image of Alexander in the Iranian literary and popular tradition forms a substantial part of this dissertation which analyzes the *Iskandarnāma* (*Book of Alexander*), the oldest prose version of the Alexander Romance in the Persian tradition (eleventh century AD). Apart from the profile of Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma,* there are various other points to be analyzed regarding the content, language and historical framework of this Persian account of the Alexander romance.

Given the existing vacuum concerning the study of the *Iskandarnāma* both in terms of content (stories, motifs, profile of the hero and general concepts concealed in the narrative) and in terms of connecting of the text with the historical periods in which it was compiled. This dissertation hopes to advance research on both of these areas.

Emphasis is given to the literary connection between the Greek tradition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance and the *Iskandarnāma*. In terms of the historicity of the text, the Muslim image of Alexander in the narrative is an unexplored and important theme in order to comprehend the narrative and the messages which are transmitted in it. The topic of kingship is a significant theme covered and aims to provide reflections of Alexander as a ruler, revealing contemporary concepts about the role of kingship amongst the Iranians. Both of the previous topics, Muslim profile and kingship, act as preludes to the next and one of the main goals of this thesis, namely to date the narrative and generally associate it with the historical development during which it was compiled. The examination of the language of the narrative also contributes to setting the narrative in its linguistic, social and historical environment. Lastly, another goal of this research is to reveal some important literary themes and concepts unfolding in the narrative, such as those of Time and Fate and Love.

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Preface

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During the compilation of the thesis, my mother, Stella, left this world, without seeing the fruits of this work. The thesis is dedicated to her. Last, Sara cannot be credited enough for her inexhaustible patience and support.

Edinburgh 26 January 2006

ABBREVIATIONS EMPLOYED

TEXTS AND AUTHORS

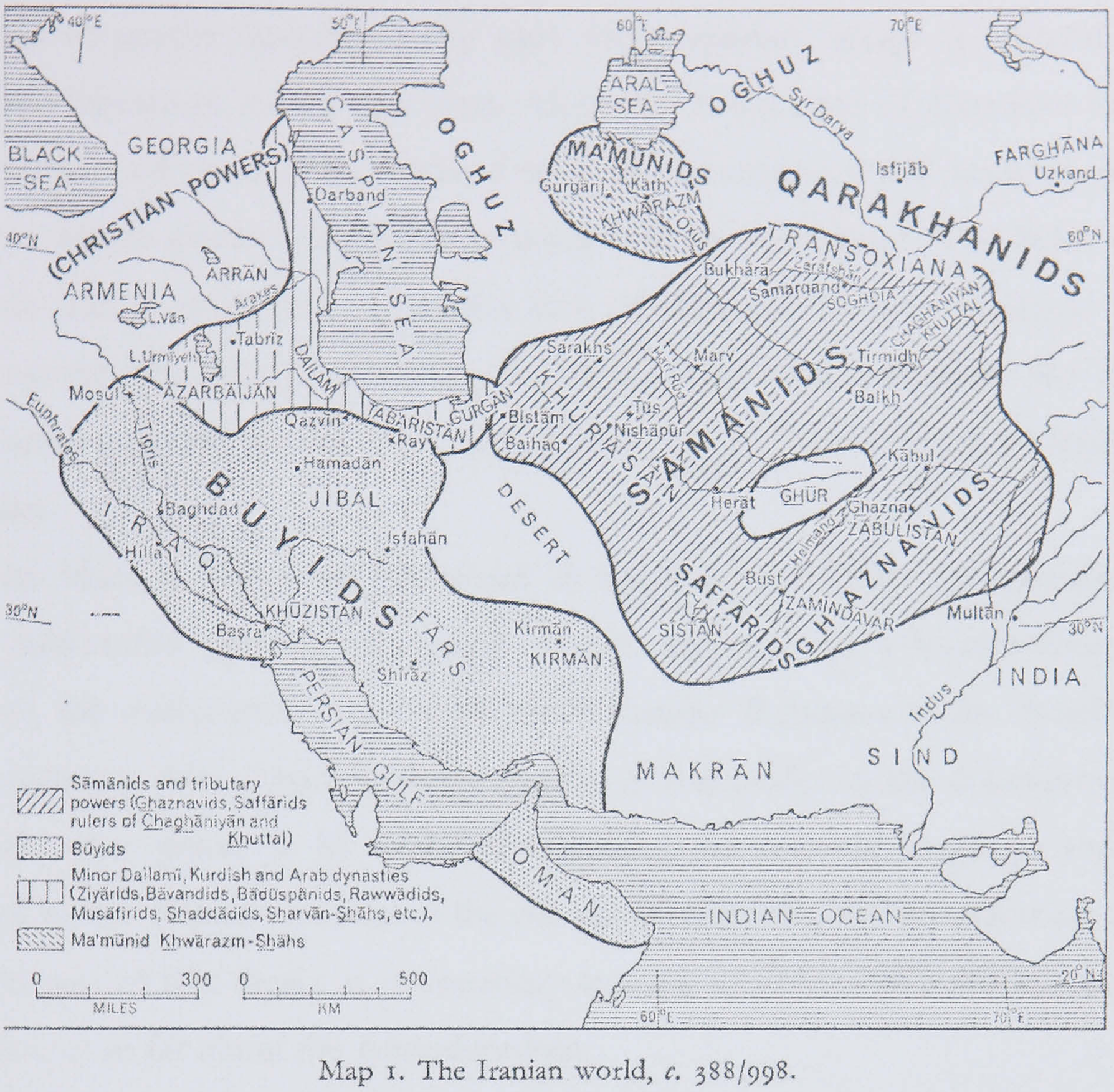
Asimov and Bosworth	Asimov, M.S. and C.E. Bosworth (eds.). *History of civilizations of Central Asia: the age of achievement: A.D.750 to the end of the fifteenth century: historical, social and economic setting* (Paris, 1992).
DN	Ṭarsūsī, Abū Ṭāḥir Muḥammad b. Ḥasan b. ʿAlī b. Mūsā, *Dārābnāma*, 2 vols., ed. Z. Ṣafā (Tehran, 1344/1965-1346/1967 or 2036).
Hanaway	Hanaway, W.L., *Persian Popular Romances before the Safavid Period*, PhD diss. Columbia University Press (New York, 1970).
IN	Anon., *Iskandarnāma*, ed. Ī. Afshār (Tehran, 1343/1964).
KSh	Niẓāmī Ganjavī, Niẓām al-Dīn Ilyās, *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, ed. V. Dastgirdī (Tehran, 1313/1934).
L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*	Harf-Lancner L., Cl. Kappler et Fr. Suard (eds.) *Alexandre le Grand dans les littératures occidentales et proche orientales*, Actes du Colloque de Paris (27-29 November 1997), (Paris, 1999).
LM	Niẓāmī Ganjavī, Niẓām al-Dīn Ilyās, *Layla u Majnūn*, ed. V. Dastgirdī (Tehran, 1333/1954).
MT	Anon., *Majmuʿl-tawārīkh wa ʾl- qiṣas*, ed. M.T. Bahār (Tehran, 1318/1939).
S. Panayotakis *et al.*	Panayotakis, S., M. Zimmerman and W. Keulen (eds.). *The Ancient Novel and Beyond* (Leiden, 2003).

Ps.Call.	Pseudo-Callisthenes. *Der Griechische Alexanderroman. Rezenzion β*, ed. L. Bergson (Güteborg – Uppsala, 1965).
Ringgren	Ringgren, H., *Fatalism in Persian Epics* (Uppsala, 1952).
Rouhi	Rouhi, L., *Mediation and Love: a study of the medieval go-between in key Romance and Near Eastern texts* (Leiden, 1999).
SN	Niẓām al-Mulk. *Siyāsatnāma or Siyar al-Mulūk*, ed. S.A. Khalkhalī (Tehran, 1310/1931).
ShN	Firdawsī, Abu 'l-Qāsim, *Shāhnāma*, I-VII, ed. E. Bertels (Moscow, 1966-1968).
Southgate	Anon., *Iskandarnāmah*, trans. M. Southgate (New York, 1978).
Syriac Version	Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The History of Alexander the Great, Being the Syriac Version*, ed. and trans. E.A. Wallis Budge (London, 1889).
QA	Nīshāpūrī, Abū Isḥaq Ibrāhīm b. Manṣūr, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, ed. Yaghmā'ī, (Tehran, 1340/1961).
VR	Gurgānī, Fakhr al-Dīn, *Vīs u Rāmīn*, ed. M.J. Mahjūb (Tehran, 1338/1959).

AJAMES	*Annals of Japan Association for Middle Eastern Studies*
AMEL	*Arabic and Middle Eastern Literatures*
Amer.Phil.Assoc.Tr.Pr.	*American Philosophical Association Transactions and Proceedings*
ArOr	*Archiv Orientální*
BJRL	*Bulletin of the John Ryland Library*
BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
CAH	*Cambridge Ancient History*
CHI	*Cambridge History of Iran*
CHIs	*Cambridge History of Islam*
CM	*Classica et Medievalia*
EC	*Epeirotika Chronika*
EIr	*Encyclopaedia Iranica*
EI^{1}	*Encyclopaedia of Islam,* first edition.
EI^{2}	*Encyclopaedia of Islam,* second edition.
EJ	*Encyclopaedia Judaica*
E.W.B. Gibb Mem. Ser.	*E.W.B. Gibb Memorial Series*
IA	*Iranica Antiqua*
IC	*Islamic Culture*
IQ	*Islamic Quarterly*
JA	*Journal Asiatique*
JAL	*Journal of Arabic Literature*
JAF	*Journal of American Folklore*
Jahr. f. Klass. Phil.	*Jahrbücher für Klassische Philologie*

JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JNES	*Journal of Near Eastern Studies*
JRAS	*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*
JSAI	*Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam*
LCL	*Loeb Classical Library*
NIB	*Nāma-yi Īrān-i Bāstān or International Journal for Ancient Iranian Studies*
PT	*Poetics Today*
St.Ir	*Studia Iranica*
St.Is	*Studia Islamica*
SCR	*Studies in Comparative Religion*
ZDMG	*Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft*

Map of eastern Iran



Map 1. The Iranian world, *c.* 388/998.

[Source: C.E. Bosworth, 'The Political and Dynastic History of the Iranian World' in *Cambridge History of Iran,* V, p. 2.]

Introduction

Alexander the Great is one of those few historical personalities that have captured the imagination of people throughout the ages. His legendary image is attested in several cultures and literatures in east and west. Alexander is the hero of numerous legends and his life has been adjusted to the needs of each era and region. Of all peoples, the Iranians were those whose glorious empire was conquered by Alexander. The latter`s image in pre-Islamic Iran is uncertain due to the lack of adequate literary evidence. In Islamic times, however, the Muslim Iranian view about Alexander surpassed the Zoroastrian tradition and turned Alexander from an evil ruler into a glorious Muslim champion, king and prophet.

The Muslim image of Alexander in the Iranian literary and popular tradition forms a substantial part of this thesis which analyzes the *Iskandarnāma* (*Book of Alexander*), the oldest prose version of the Alexander Romance in the Persian tradition (eleventh century AD). Apart from the profile of Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma,* there are various other points to be analyzed regarding the content, language and historical framework of this Persian account of the Alexander romance. Before referring to the aims and importance of this thesis, it is necessary to view what kind of scholarly research has been produced so far about the *Iskandarnāma*.

The manuscript of the *Iskandarnāma* is kept in the private collection of Sa'īd Nafīsī in Tehran.[1] So far it has been dated only vaguely to between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries AD. The author, the precise date and location of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* remain uncertain. The narrative concerns a legendary account of Alexander`s life, mainly in Central Asia.

Apart from its literary value, the *Iskandarnāma* is the topic of this thesis because so far it has not been adequately studied. It is striking that a monograph exclusively devoted to this prose romance has not yet been written. The edition of the text was produced by Ī. Afshār in 1964.[2] In his introduction Afshār insightfully analyzed the major issues regarding the text, such as its date, the status of the manuscript and the connection

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[1] See p.75

[2] Anon., *Iskandarnāma*, ed. Ī. Afshār (Tehran, 1343/1964).

between the *Iskandarnāma* and the rest of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition.[3] However, Afshār's focus was on the edition of the manuscript and not an exhaustive analysis of the content.

Hanaway contributed further to the study of the *Iskandarnāma*, albeit in a restricted way, in his thesis about pre-Safavid romances.[4] In particular he included the *Iskandarnāma* in a comparative study between five pre-Safavid prose romances which he termed 'popular': the *Dārābnāma*, the *Fīrūzshāhnāma*, the *Samak 'ayyār* and the *Qiṣṣa-yi Ḥamza*. Concerning the *Iskandarnāma* this comparison involved mainly the Persianization of Alexander in Persian literature.[5] In the other comparative chapters of his thesis, the *Iskandarnāma* is the least examined romance. Hanaway's thesis was the first contribution to a basic knowledge of the content of the *Iskandarnāma*.

Thirteen years later (1977) an abridged English translation of the *Iskandarnāma* was produced by Southgate.[6] The translator preferred partial translation because of the extent and the repetitive character of the Persian text. In spite of the various imperfections of her translation, this was the first, and thus pioneering, effort to familiarise the English-speaking audience of the West with the unknown content of the *Iskandarnāma*. Southgate's translation was her only major contribution to the study of the *Iskandarnāma*. Her brief introduction to the translation (five pages) contains some reference to the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* tradition and the technical details of the text itself, details already cited in Afshār's edition. In the three appendices, following the English translation, Southgate gives further details on the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* tradition and she deals with second hand material about the Persian Alexander romances (*Shāhnāma*, *Dārābnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*s by Niẓāmī and Jāmī').[7] In the second appendix, she analyzes the Pahlavi literary tradition about Alexander and in the third appendix she gives a brief description of Alexander's story in Muslim historiographical accounts, such as those of al-Dīnawarī, al-Ṭabarī and al-Mas'ūdī.[8] She also cites some useful notes about

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[3] Ibid., 10-43.
[4] *Persian Popular Romances before the Safavid Period*, PhD diss. Columbia University Press (New York, 1970).
[5] Ibid., 66-129.
[6] Anon., *Iskandarnāmah*, trans. M.S. Southgate (New York, 1977).
[7] Ibid., 167-185.
[8] Ibid., 186-195.

the tradition of the *double-horned one*.[9] In spite of the second hand material that Southgate employs in her analysis and the very abridged character of her translation (almost one fifth of the Persian text), her endeavour was certainly an important contribution to the study of the *Iskandarnāma*. However, predictably enough, there is no analysis of the content itself in her work.

Apart from the above works, there have been only articles or entries in encyclopaedias. Rubanovic, elaborating more on one of Hanaway's ideas,[10] sheds valuable light on the reconstruction process of the storytelling events in her article.[11] The analysis of the themes into main and secondary (or inserted) stories is an important contribution regarding the internal construction and the folk element of the *Iskandarnāma*. Southgate wrote also an article in which she compares quite briefly and generally the portrait of Alexander in various Persian Alexander romances. [12] Hanaway's entry about the *Iskandarnāma* in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* provides only a general introduction to the Persian Alexander romances.[13]

The above analysis recalls the existing vacuum concerning the study of the *Iskandarnāma* both in terms of content (stories, motifs, profile of the hero and general concepts concealed in the narrative) and in terms of connecting of the text with the historical periods in which it was compiled. This thesis hopes to advance research on both of these areas.

In particular the goals of this thesis are multiple. Emphasis is given to the literary connection between the Greek tradition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance and the *Iskandarnāma*. Closely associated with the Greek and Persian literary tradition of the Alexander romance is also the issue of the influence of the *Shāhnāmā* on the *Iskandarnāma*. In terms of the historicity of the text, the Muslim image of Alexander in the narrative is an unexplored and important theme in order to comprehend the narrative and the messages which are transmitted in it. The topic of kingship is a significant theme covered and aims to provide reflections of Alexander as a ruler, revealing contemporary

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[9] Ibid., 196-201.
[10] Hanaway, 233-237.
[11] 'The Reconstruction of a story telling event in medieval Persian Prose Romance: the case of Iskandarnāmah', *Edebiyat*, 9 (1999), 215-247.
[12] M.S. Southgate, 'Portrait of Alexander the Great in Persian Alexander Romances of the Islamic Era', *JAOS*, 97 (1977), 278-284.
[13] W.L. Hanaway, 'Eskandar-Nāma', *EIr*, 8, 611.

concepts about the role of kingship amongst the Iranians. Both of the previous topics, Muslim profile and kingship, act as preludes to the next and one of the main goals of this thesis, namely to date the narrative and generally associate it with the historical development during which it was compiled. The examination of the language of the narrative also contributes to setting the narrative in its linguistic, social and historical environment. Lastly, another goal of this research is to reveal some important literary themes and concepts unfolding in the narrative, such as those of Time and Fate and Love.

So the main aim of this thesis is to unveil some of the hidden treasures of the content of the *Iskandarnāma* and to dispute the established term 'popular' which has been given to this romance. It is suggested that, although the linguistic and literary style of the narrative is simple, this is not true of its content and the arrangement of stories.

Moreover, it suggested that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* aimed not only to entertain but also to edify his readers and audience about an aspect of the historical past of Iran, the reign of Alexander. Through this historical edification the romance acts as a device for propagating the image of the Sultan and the political system that favoured its compilation.

The goals of the thesis are structured as follows. In the first chapter, there is an analysis of the connection between the *Pseudo-Callisthenes' Alexander romance*, a work of the Greek literary tradition, and the *Iskandarnāma*, reflecting the Persian tradition regarding Alexander. At the beginning, several introductory details are given about both texts, such as their content, structure and their semi-historical and semi-fictitious character. Regarding the *Pseudo-Callisthenes' romance*, special importance is given to its role as a reflection of Alexander's image in Late Antiquity and several details are provided about the sources and the manuscripts of the *recension β* of the Greek text. In relation to the *Iskandarnāma*, some brief introductory details are provided, including the date of the compilation of the text. A brief layout of the romance is also provided in order to familiarize the reader with its content.

The transitional period between the two texts forms the main part of the first chapter. By examining the case of the so-called Pahlavi translation of the *Iskandarnāma*, it is emphasized that the Iranians displayed a particular interest in the life of Alexander and that this Pahlavi version must have influenced the compilation of the *Khwadaynāmag*

(*Book of Lords*). This account influenced the early literary tradition in the Muslim world and, indirectly later on, the compilation of the *Shāhnāma*. Firdawsī's account is also analyzed as a key account which received and transmitted much of the considerable pre-Islamic literary influence and in particular the influence of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* tradition. Due to this influence and in combination with the fact that the *Shāhnāma* was one of the sources for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*, the *Shāhnāma* acts as a bridge between the two texts, the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* romance and the *Iskandarnāma*. In order to prove this chain of transmission between the two traditions, an analysis of various common themes follows, first between *Pseudo-Callisthenes* and the *Shāhnāma*, and second between the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*.

Moreover, a special section of this chapter is devoted to the direct influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the *Iskandarnāma* in terms of stories, motifs and the profile of Alexander. Hanaway in his thesis also wrote a section about the influence of the *Shāhnāmā* in Persian prose romances generally but only eight lines are devoted to the case of the *Iskandarnāma*.[14]

The theme of the second chapter is the dating of the *Iskandarnāma* according to the evidence coming from the text. After describing the basic features of the Tehran manuscript and the various theories related to the time of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*, the analysis goes further to suggest connections between the text and the historical circumstances under which it was compiled.

In the next chapter it is suggested that the *Shāhnāmā* was the most important source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*. This statement is based mainly on two factors: Alexander's image as the semi-Iranian legitimate king of Iran in the narrative and the repertoire that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* uses. Hence, the prose *Iskandarnāma* confirms the widely accepted view, according to which the *Shāhnāmā* was a source of considerable influence in regard to the formation of various Persian accounts in pre-Safavid Iran.

In the fourth chapter, it is stressed that kingship forms a major concept for the development of the narrative. The notion of the righteous ruler forms the protagonist's image. This notion is based on the general concept of kingship in medieval Iran, and

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[14] Hanaway, 197.

particularly on the pre-Islamic and Islamic concepts of rulership. After dealing with these aspects, there is an analysis of the Ghaznavid and Saljūq concepts of kingship. In the second and main section of the chapter, there is an emphasis on both the pre-Islamic and Islamic elements regarding kingship. The pre-Islamic concept in the narrative is revealed through Alexander's half-Iranian identity, the Divine Effulgence and the Cycle of the legendary and historical Iranian kings. The Islamic concept is reflected in the models of the *ghāzī king*, the *prophet king*, the role of Angels and the prophetic figure of Khiḍr. Also Wise Old Men and animals associated with Islamic lore contribute to the Muslim profile of the hero. Last but not least, a major factor promoting the Muslim image of Alexander is that of the *Mirrors for Princes* (*andarz accounts*). This tradition is reflected in the *Iskandarnāma*.

In the fifth chapter special attention is paid to the issue of Alexander's Muslim profile in the *Iskandarnāma*. This profile coexists with his ethnic, Graeco-Iranian, origin. Alexander's Muslim profile in the narrative is formed through the concept of the *dhu'l-qarnayn* (the *double-horned one*), the model of the conquering Muslim warrior, the influence of the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition and role of supernatural creatures which are associated with Islamic lore. These creatures are extensively analyzed in order to denote their profile within Muslim lore. They are identified with *the davālpāyān, the Elephant-Ears, the Demons (Dīvs), the Zangīs and the Parīs (Fairies).* Another motif which contributes to the Muslim profile of the hero is Alexander's association, or even identification, with the prophetic figure of Solomon.

The second part of the thesis focuses on the literary themes which are detected in the narrative. It aims to display the rich content of the *Iskandarnāma* in terms of concepts, stories, *topoi* and narrative techniques. This part consists of three sections.

The concept of time and fate in the *Iskandarnāma* form the content of the first section. Particularly, there is a brief reference to the pre-Islamic Iranian notion of time which influences the author of the *Iskandarnāma*. Pre-Islamic notions about time are present not only in the *Iskandarnāma* but in most pieces of medieval Persian literature. In the *Iskandarnāma*, there is an interesting coexistence of pre-Islamic and Islamic elements regarding various abstract powers, such as time and fate determining the function of this world. This coexistence influences considerably the development of the narrative.

Additionally, the theme of love is central in the narrative and is analysed in the next section. Love forms a fundamental aspect of epic prose romances. The role of love is closely associated with the influence of the Hellenic literary tradition. It consists of two forms: spiritual and physical. Both of these forms are attested in the *Iskandarnāma* and several examples are used in order to reveal the double dimension of love. Another important motif in the narrative is that of war-like women, such as Burāndukht, Arāqīt, Suhayl and so on.

Conclusions follow the main part of the analysis summarizing the main findings of the thesis. An appendix follows, providing the reader with three major aspects of the romance. In the first part various aspects of the language of the *Iskandarnāma* are highlighted. Particularly, it provides some examples of the lexical, morphological and syntactical phenomena of the *Iskandarnāma*. Thus the analysis of the language of the narrative can contribute to a better understanding of the simple style of this popular prose romance and, due to the various archaisms of the narrative, this section can be useful in regard to examining more precise dating of the narrative. In the second part of the appendix there is an analysis of the common stories between the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, the *Shāhnāmā* and the *Iskandarnāma*. This section aims to reveal the inner connection between the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition and the *Iskandarnāma*. The third part deals with the recensions of the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance. A bibliography with the primary and secondary references forms the final part of the corpus of the thesis.

In terms of methodology, the arrangement of the above chapters denotes the main aim of the thesis which is to analyze the *Iskandarnāma* itself and then to associate it with the rest of the Persian literary tradition. By bringing forward several key ideas of the text, the thesis aims to reveal the importance of the *Iskandarnāma* as an important prose account of medieval Persian literature and a treasury of ideas and notions reflecting public beliefs in pre-Safavid Iran.

Hanaway's comparative study of all popular prose romances has shown that it is impossible to combine a full examination of all accounts with an adequate analysis of a topic. Hanaway's thesis was, and still remains, a leading work on the genre of pre-Safavid Persian popular prose romances. Nevertheless, his analysis could not exhaust the content of the five romances in regard to every topic he chose. He acted selectively in the

analysis of a theme and this resulted in an incomplete treatment of both the topics he analyzed and the romances he compared, including the *Iskandarnāma*.

By contrast, this thesis does not analyze all prose romances. Emphasis is placed on the *Iskandarnāma* and the Alexander tradition in prose romances. Hence the *Iskandarnāma* is compared mainly with the *Dārābnāma,* the other classical example of early Persian prose Alexander romance. Depending each time on the nature of the analyzed topic, the *Iskandarnāma* is compared with a restricted number of texts. The genre is not a restrictive factor. When comparison in terms of motifs and ideas is to be made, other accounts, not necessarily prose, are also employed, such as the poems *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, *Layla u Majnūn* and so on. Thus, an attempt is made both to associate the *Iskandarnāma* with the rest of Persian literature and by restricting the number of texts compared in the thesis more space is given to a more detailed analysis of various aspects of the *Iskandarnāma*.

This research combines both literary and historical aspects of analysis. In literary terms an attempt is made to analyze general ideas and concepts, such as that of time and fate or love. The evidence of the *Iskandarnāma* is compared to that of other Persian accounts on the same topic. Thus the reader is able to form a comparative view of a subject in various key Persian accounts. Accounts, mostly in prose, are chosen, based on their relation with the *Iskandarnāma* in terms of topic, period of compilation and partially of genre.

In historical terms, the *Iskandarnāma* is associated with the period in which it was compiled, at least in its early stages. First, it is suggested that the initial steps to the compilation of the narrative can be dated according to the evidence derived from the text itself. This is very risky because of the legendary and semi-popular character of the *Iskandarnāma*. In a legendary account, it is very difficult to define what is purely historical and what is not. Nevertheless several pieces of evidence in the *Iskandarnāma* can be compared with the evidence attested in accounts of the same period. Through this process this analysis reaches a conclusion regarding the time that the *Iskandarnāma* was first compiled (eleventh century AD). Another aspect of the historical analysis of the text is the comparison between the concept of kingship and the image of the ruler in the

Iskandarnāma and the *andarz* tradition. Hence through a dual analysis of the narrative, historical and literary, an attempt is made to provide a rounded view of the narrative.

On technical issues, the term *Islamic* is used to define the period, the principles, the culture and the political entities of the Middle East after the emergence of Islam. The term *Muslim* is used for the people who believe in the Islamic doctrine. Moreover the term *Islamic* refers also to concepts, oral and written traditions going back to pre-Islamic times both in the Iranian and Hellenic cultures. In this case the term Islamic expresses the Islamised connotation that various pre-islamic ideas and terms acquired after the emergence of Islam and the fusion of pre-Islamic elements with the Islamic tradition, for example Alexander's travels literary motif is of pre-Islamic origin but it is used in an Islamic context to reflect the concept of expanding Islam.

The transliteration system employed is that of the *Encyclopaedia of Islam* (second edition) with the following exceptions: *j, q, th, dh, gh, kh, sh* instead of *dj, k, th, dh, gh, kh* and *sh* respectively. The diphthongs are cited as *aw* and *ay*. The short vowels are *a, u, i* and the long vowels are ā, ū and ī. In regard to the use of article in Arabic, the cases of *wa al*, *dhū 'l* and *fī 'l* are cited as *wa 'l*, *dhu 'l* and *fi 'l* respectively. Persian additions to the Arabic alphabet are also transliterated as *zh, p* and *ch*. Persian and Arabic names of authors are transliterated when their works are written in Persian or Arabic, for example *M.J. Maḥjūb*. When works are written in western languages, the author's Persian or Arabic name appears (transliterated or not) as cited in his/her publication, for example *'A. Zarrīnkūb*. Proper names of cities and regions of the past are also transliterated, for example *Nīshāpūr*. Contemporary geographical names and terms are not transliterated, for example *Tehran*. Quotations from primary sources and their translations are cited in italics. The quotations to the Persian original passages are written in the Arabic script. In the appendix 1 (the language of the narrative), the author cited Persian examples in transliteration. This aims to help those readers who are not familiar with the Arabic script and are interested in the linguistic aspects of the narrative.

Regarding references in the footnotes, when a work is cited for the first time, it is presented in full, except for the abbreviations. Then it is cited only by surname of the author, a brief form of the title and the relevant page(s). When a work is frequently used, it is abbreviated. When commonly cited, titles of journals are abbreviated too.

Chapter I.

From the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance to the prose *Iskandarnāma*

Alexander's life and exploits (356-333 BC) stimulated the interest and imagination of his contemporaries and future generations probably more than those of any other personality in history.[1] The transmission of the legend of Alexander spread through the oral and literary media in Late Antiquity and the early Islamic period. While the historical accounts of his life were accessible to the literate population of that time, the upper classes of the society, the oral tradition at first, and the popular literary tradition thereafter, became the main sources for the transmission of Alexander's legend to the average illiterate and semi-educated middle and lower classes of society. It was mainly through the latter sources of information that future generations would become aware of Alexander and, hence, there occurred the immortalization of his name and life.

One of the aims of this chapter is to explore two texts of this popular literary tradition about Alexander's legendary life. In particular, the reader is introduced to the basic details of the texts of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* Romance (Greek version, *recension β*) and the Persian text of the *Iskandarnāma* written by an anonymous author. After this brief introduction, attention will be paid to the literary connection between the two texts. The main aim of this chapter is to show the strong correspondence between the two accounts and how they were transmitted from the literature of Late Antiquity to the polite and popular literature of Islamic Iran.

i. The Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance

The knowledge of the common man regarding Alexander the Great from Late Antiquity to the Renaissance, both in the East and the West, was mainly derived from the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition established by the popular prose account of

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[1] Legends about Alexander's life exist in many cultural frames. See J. Bečka, 'Alexander the Great in Persian-Tajik and Czeck Literature', *ArOr*, 53 (1985), 314-338; M. Marin, 'Legends on Alexander the Great in Muslim Spain', *Graeco-Arabica*, 4 (1991), 71-90; *Ps.Call., A Hebrew Alexander Romance according to MS London Jews' College*, trans. W. Jac. van Bekkum, no. 145, vol. 1 (Louvain, 1992) and M. Bridges, 'Empowering the Hero: Alexander as Author in the Epistola Alexandri ad Aristotelem and its Medieval English Versions', in *The Problematics of Power. Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great*, ed. M. Bridges and J.Ch. Bürgel (Geneva, 1995), 45-59.

the Greek text of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes' Life of Alexander.*[2] This mixture of fiction and inaccurate historical material was later translated into several languages and thus the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition was established in the East and West, having a catalytic influence on the literary production concerning Alexander in several cultures.

The Greek version is a romanticized biography (novel) of Alexander's life.[3] Novels in antiquity were written, first to praise after death an important personality, second to create an ideal model of a person in a didactic manner, and third to entertain (Pseudo-Callisthenes' account).[4] The period in which the original *Pseudo-Callisthenes Romance* was written remains uncertain, although it dates back to the period between the third and fourth century AD.[5] The original Greek has been preserved in five redactions but none of these represents the romance in its original written form.[6] Since many unhistorical legendary accounts must have been produced immediately after Alexander's death, or even during his lifetime,[7] the so-called original Greek text of the *recension α* was probably based on some of these accounts.

With regard to the sources of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account, it has been suggested that the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account came from a pre-existing account (second century AD) and this was the result of Ptolemaic Alexandria.[8] However, the theory was outdated by another one, according to which this account was the product of Roman times, based on pre-existing sources.[9] These sources of the Greek text were probably the so-called Cleitarchus' biographical account,[10] a collection of letters

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[2] *Ps.Call.*

[3] It is a novel (or romance) of late antiquity. Being a product of Hellenistic times, a novel was initially a versified narration and later on, in the Middle Ages, it acquired a prose form and was written in simple and popular language. It contained fictitious material with a historical framework. The audience of novels were the common people, who lived in isolated regions, and they found it easier to read a novel than the highly sophisticated classical works. It was popular amongst all social classes, especially the lower ones. Illiterate people enjoyed novels through the narrations of other literate fellow citizens. See T. Hägg, *The Novel in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1983). 118-130.

[4] Ibid., 148.

[5] Some scholars date the text to 300 AD. See *Ps.Call.*, x.; D.J.A. Ross, *Alexander Historiatus: A Guide to Medieval Illustrated Alexander Literature* (London, 1963). 5. According to Cary, an appropriate date for the text would be to 200 AD. See G. Cary, *The Medieval Alexander* (Cambridge, 1956, repr. 1967). 9.

[6] Ross, *op.cit.*, 5.

[7] See the case of Alexander's descent from Zeus Ammon, a story probably created for political reasons. W.W. Tarn, *Alexander the Great* (Cambridge University Press, 1948). I:77.

[8] A. Ausfeld, *Der griechische Alexanderroman* (Leipzig, 1907) 238-239; Fr. Pfister, 'Studien zur Alexanderroman,' *Würzburger Jahrbuch* I (1946). 29-66.

[9] R. Merkelbach, 'Die Quellen des Griechischen Alexanderromans' (Munich, 1954). *Zetemata* XI. 59.

[10] About the work of Cleitarchus that has survived in fragmentary form, see Tarn, *op.cit.*, 2:43-55.

derived from the Epistolary Romance of Alexander.[11] another collection of letters dealing with the eastern marvels that Alexander saw, the account regarding the meeting of Alexander with the Indian *gymnosophistae* and finally the political pamphlet *"Alexander's Last days and Testament"*.[12] However, it is not possible to form a precise picture of the sources of this work.[13]

Though the author is believed to be unknown, the text indicates that he was Christian and lived probably in the Middle East, and also probably in Egypt.[14] Modern scholars gave it the conventional name *"Pseudo-Callisthenes"*, since in one of the manuscripts the text was falsely attributed to the peripatetic philosopher Callisthenes.[15] Egypt is the most probable area of origin of the author. This claim results from the use of the legendary Egyptian version of Alexander's birth and origin as well as the episode with Queen Candace of Ethiopia in the Greek text. In particular, concerning the Egyptian legendary perspective about Alexander's birth, Alexander appears as the son of the Pharaoh of Egypt, Nectenabo, who takes refuge in the court of Philip in Macedon due to the Persian invasion (fourth century BC). He is welcomed by Philip and he becomes the court sorcerer. Nectenabo manages to seduce Olympias, the wife of Philip, during the absence of the latter on an expedition. The fruit of this seduction is Alexander.[16] With respect to the episode of Alexander with Queen Candace, the geographical frame of the story and the entire plot are not connected with the Greek historiographical and legendary tradition about Alexander but are probably the influence and incorporation of local Egyptian legends about Alexander.[17]

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[11] These epistles were independent in number and character and gradually they were united and incorporated into certain narrations (epistle novels). Some fragments of these letters survive in papyri. See Merkelbach, *op.cit.*, 1-40; Ross, *op.cit.*, 5.

[12] This pamphlet was created after the death of Alexander in order to support Perdiccas' claims to the succession against Antipater. Merkelbach, *op.cit.*, 60.

[13] See R. Macuch, 'Pseudo-Callisthenes Orientalis and the problem of Dhul Qarnayn', *Graeco-Arabica*, 4 (1991), 224-236.

[14] Ross, *op.cit.*, 5-6; also see E. Venetis, 'The Portrait of Alexander the Great in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance, in the Codex of Venice and in some Persian miniatures', *Graeco - Arabica*, 7-8 (2000), 548.

[15] Callisthenes, the nephew of Aristotle, accompanied Alexander on his campaign and he wrote a now lost account of this expedition. He died in prison after a probable conspiracy against Alexander's life. He is also known for his firm opposition to the demand of Alexander for the adoption of the Persian custom of *proskynesis (=prostration)*. Tarn, *op.cit.*, 1:80.

[16] The Egyptian version therefore provides a legendary interpretation of the historically special and unusual attachment of Alexander to the Egyptian cult of the god Ammon at the Siwa oases. For the story about Nectenabo see *Ps.Call.*, 1.1-3.

[17] Ross, *op.cit.*, 5-6.

The *Pseudo-Callisthenes* account is a collection of folk tales from the Middle East, mainly the Greek, Syriac and Arabic-speaking areas. about the life of Alexander. in written form. The text can be used as a supplement by the historian but not as a basic and reliable historical source dealing with Alexander the Great. It is valuable for the researcher of Middle Eastern literature and folk tradition in the last centuries before the rise of Islam. The romance reflects the legends and the local tradition of the Middle Eastern regions (from Egypt to Asia Minor and from Greece to Greater Syria/Bilād al-Shām) concerning Alexander's personality. The supernatural elements in the story are numerous and the writer maintains an extremely positive attitude towards Alexander's character, pointing out his good features and at the same time diminishing or balancing his negative ones.[18] Actually this work is a hymn dedicated to Alexander with a variety of supernatural perceptions, features and incidents. It is also interesting that, although the author probably derived information and literary material from Persian oral traditions about Alexander, there is no trace at all of the negative image of the Persian literary tradition which many Persians held about him (for example, they called him *'sitamgār'*, tyrant).[19]

Despite its folk style, the romance has a strong historical core.[20] The historical character of the romance can be found in several forms: the linear route of the narration agrees with the linear historical sequence of the events in Alexander's life: birth,[21] childhood, enthronement in Macedon, campaign against the Persians, conquest of the Achaemenid Empire, advancement to the lands east of the Achaemenid Empire and death.[22] This linear approach in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* text is strengthened by the framework of historical names attributed to the characters of the romance (Alexander's family, his opponents), geographical names (battles, regions, kingdoms, rivers) and several episodes in the life of Alexander (birth,

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[18] See *Ps.Call.*, II.15: *"Οι δε Πέρσαι απέβλεπον θαυμάζοντας τον Αλέξανδρον επι τη του σώματος σμικρότητι αλλ' ηγνόουν οτι εν μικρω αγγείω τύχης ουρανίου ην δόξα" (=The Persians were wondering about the small size of Alexander's body but they did not know that the glory of the Heaven is in a small pot).*

[19] Macuch, *op.cit.*, 224-236.

[20] Cary, *op.cit.*, 10.

[21] *Ps.Call.*, I.12: *"του δε παιδος πεσόντος εις την γην εγένοντο βροντων κτύποι αλλεπάλληλοι και αστραπων φωτισμοι, ωστε τον σύμπαντα κόσμον κινεισθαι" (= As soon as the boy fell on the ground sounds of thunder were heard and the light of thunder was seen so that the whole world trembled).*

[22] *Ps.Call.*, III.33: *"ο δε αστηρ πάλιν ανηλθεν εις τον ουρανον, ηκολούθησε δε αυτω και ο αετος. κρυβέντος δε του αστέρος εις τον ουρανον ευθέως εκοιμήθη Αλέξανδρος τον αιώνιον ύπνον."(= and the star went up again to the sky. It was followed by the eagle. As soon as the star was hidden in the sky Alexander slept the eternal sleep.)*

campaigns. marriage, death). These features are most of the time in agreement with the ancient historical accounts.[23] Several main instances from the life of Alexander reflect this agreement; for example, Alexander's birth in the kingdom of Macedon and the main details of the early years of his life (except his so-called Egyptian origin from Nectenabo) are close to historical accounts. Moreover, the incident with the guests of his father Philip (Philip II the King of Macedon, B.C 359-336) and the insult towards the latter are not far from the ancient historical texts. If one reads the romance closely, it is not difficult to find further similarities between the fictional text and the more reliable ancient historical accounts. One such example is the defeat of Darius (Dārā, Darius III Codomanus, the Achaemenid king, 336-330 BC) in the battle of Issos (333 BC) and the capture of the members of his family by Alexander.[24] Another example is that of the retreat of Darius to Media and the last battle against Alexander at Gaugamela (331 BC).[25] These examples are close to the historical accounts, denoting the fact that the narration of the main events has a historical core which is expressed through the plot of the story.

By contrast, the secondary details of the stories of the romance are fictional and therefore differentiate the text of *Pseudo-Callisthenes* from the ancient historical accounts. For example, in the case of the persecution of Darius by Alexander, the major common features between romance and historiography are the will of Alexander to capture the Achaemenid king alive in order to restore him to his throne, the assassination of Darius by his ministers and the punishment of the latter by Alexander.[26] The fictional element in this story is expressed in several ways and

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[23] Comparing the text by Arrian and the other historical sources with that of *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account one can recognise the similarities. In the case of Alexander's campaign against the Illyrians, Paiones and Triballi the information of *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account is in agreement, although in a shorter form, with the historical account of Arrian: *"Ιλλυρικών δε και Παιόνων και Τριβαλλών της αρχης αποστάντων επ' αυτούς επεστρατεύσατο."(When the Illyrians, Paiones and Triballi broke the treaty, Alexander campaigned against them) Ps.Call.*, I.26.10-11; *"αμα δε τω ήρει ελαύνειν επι Θράκης, ες Τριβαλλους και Ιλλυριους, οτι τε νεωτερίζειν επύθετο" (At the advent of spring he marched towards Thrace against the Triballi and the Illyrians)* Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*, vol. I-II, (Cambridge Mass.-London, 1976), vol. I, I 1.4 Also see Plutarch, *Bίοι*, trans. R. Flacelière et É. Chambry, *Vies*, IX (Paris, 1975), 9.11.5; Justin, *Epitome of the Philippic History of Pompeius Trogus*, Books 11-12: *Alexander the Great*, trans. and appendices by J. C. Yardley, commentary by W. Heckel (Oxford, 1997), 11.1.6.

[24] Arrian, III.17; Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca Historica*, vol. III, rec. E. Bekker (Leipzig, 1853), 17.36-37; Curtius Rufus, Quintus, *De Rebus Gestis Alexandri Magni, Libri Superstites*, ed. N. E. Lemaire (Paris, 1822), III.xii; Plutarch, 9.20.11; Justin, 11.9.12; Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, vol. 6-7, trans. H.L. Jones (Cambridge Mass.1969-1970), XIV, 17; *Ps.Call.*, II.9.

[25] Arrian, III.9-15; Diodorus, 17.55f.; Rufus, V.i; Plutarch, 9.31.6; Justin, 11.13; Strabo, XVI.1.3; *Ps.Call.*, II.17.

[26] Arrian III, 19-21; Diodorus, 17.73.3; Plutarch, 9.43; *Ps.Call.*, II.21.

mainly through the fictional dialogue between Darius and Alexander and their reconciliation before Darius passes away.[27] Similar examples can be found in the case of the Indian campaign of Alexander and the defeat of King Porus (the king of eastern Punjab, 326 BC),[28] the death of Alexander and others.

The *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance is a classic example of accounts influenced by the syncretistic spirit of Late Antiquity; it is a combination of ancient Graeco-Roman notions and a Christian cultural context of Late Antiquity. This syncretism becomes apparent in the creation of the figure of Alexander. He is presented, in an anachronistic way, as thinking with a Christian mind long before Christ's birth though he always acts in an ancient historical context. The figure of Alexander is also the syncretistic figure of an ancient Greek and pro-Christian ruler. He is not a Christian but he is presented as having monotheistic-Christian ideas expressed in a philosophical form. The concepts *"divine providence"*, *"superior power"* reflect messages of a monotheistic background.[29] The writer adopts a mixed calendar system, using simultaneously the Christian calendar, dating back from the Creation of the World (*έρος*), the ancient calendar based on the holding of the Olympic Games (*ολγ*) every four years, and lastly, counting down up to Jesus Christ's birth (324 years).[30] It is obvious that the author of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance lived in the transitional period between the Later Roman times and the beginning of the Byzantine chronographic and historiographical period.

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[27] *Ps.Call.*, II.20.

[28] In the historical accounts Poros is not killed by Alexander as is attested in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition. See Arrian, V.9-18; *Ps.Call.*, III.1-4.

[29] Alexander exhibits a spirit of modesty and a philosophical approach to life, showing many similarities with the Christian code of ethics. The terms *"διάκονος"* (=servant), *"πρόνοια"* (=divine power) are terms closely associated with the Christian terminology of the Greek-speaking Christians. See *Ps.Call.*, III.6: *"ταυτα εκ της ανω προνοίας διοικειται, ινα ημεις υμων διάκονοι γενώμεθα της εκείνων επιταγης."* (=these things have been decided by the divine power this way in order for us to become servants of their orders). The plural "εκείνων" (=their) certainly corresponds to the three faces of the Christian God (Holy Trinity), since the author of the text is Christian.

[30] It is an anachronism justified by the folk character of the text and it reflects the religious background of the compiler.

The Life of Alexander in the Greek Pseudo-Callisthenes' Romance

A Synopsis

According to the Greek text, Alexander's father is not Philip, but Nectenabo (the Egyptian high priest and last king of Egypt who fled to the Macedonian court, according to the legend) and his mother is Olympias who is seduced by Nectenabo and becomes pregnant when Philip was away on campaign.[31] Philip accepts Olympias' baby as his own since he considers him to be the son of the god Zeus-Amon. When Alexander grows up, he decides to kill Nectenabo without knowing that he is Nectenabo's son. He learns the truth just a few moments before Nectenabo dies. Alexander is presented as being glorious and having rare skills in every activity he undertakes. These go beyond those of ordinary humans and his abilities are successfully tested in the chariot race of the Olympic Games at Pissa of ancient Olympia.[32] At the age of eighteen Alexander becomes the king of Macedon,[33] unites the rest of the Greeks and campaigns against the Paeones and Triballoi in the Aimos peninsula. He returns to Greece to punish his political enemies who have revolted against him and then embarks on the conquest of the Achaemenid Empire.[34]

He crosses the Hellespont pass and he starts his well-known route of conquest to the heart of the Achaemenid Empire. During his campaign several non-historical events are quoted; for example, in Alexander's campaign against Poros, the former kills the Indian king, although, in fact, Poros after his defeat was not killed but became a satrap.[35] After the murder of Darius by the Achaemenid king's disloyal servants, Alexander listens to Darius' dying wishes. Then Alexander's wedding with Roxane follows.

As soon as he has accomplished the conquest of the Achaemenid Empire, Alexander decides to march further eastwards. He campaigns against India and kills Poros in a single combat,[36] visits the gymnosophists (=naked sages) and starts narrating the wonders he sees in letters to his teacher Aristotle; for instance, he

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[31] Olympias belonged to the royal family of Epirus, her motherland. About the birth of Alexander, according to the Egyptian version, see Ibid., I.4.
[32] Alexander succeeds in defeating his arrogant competitors in the race. See Ibid., I.18-20.
[33] Ibid., I.26.
[34] Ibid., I.29.
[35] See Arrian, II. 18.; *Ps.Call.*, III.4.
[36] Ibid., III.4.9.

discovers the male and female talking trees. Then he pays a visit to Queen Candace[37] and also contacts the Amazons.[38] He returns to Babylon and sends a letter to his mother.[39]

During the campaign against Darius, and in particular after the proclamation of Alexander as king of the vast Achaemenid Empire, divine power sends several omens about his premature death. He is poisoned by an enemy.[40] and, before his death, writes his will.[41] Then the narration deals with the issue of Alexander's funeral and the place where he is eventually buried (Alexandria, Egypt). The narration ends with a brief account of Alexander's life and deeds.[42]

ii. The Persian popular prose account of the *Iskandarnāma*

As is suggested in the chapter on Dating the Narrative, the early stages of the creation of the *Iskandarnāma* must be dated mainly to the early eleventh century AD and in particular the reign of Sulṭān Maḥmūd (997-1030 AD).[43] Afterwards the narrative was re-compiled in the following two or three centuries (twelfth-fourteenth centuries). The narrative in its early stages must have been written in one of the major cities of the Ghaznavid kingdom in eastern Iran, probably Nīshāpūr, Merv, Herat or even Ganja. The author of the romance cannot be defined due to the defective character of the manuscript in the private collection of Sa'īd Nafīsī in Tehran.[44]

The *Iskandarnāma* presents Alexander as *Iskandar*, a king with a Persian-Muslim profile, an image formed in the Persian popular mind during the medieval Islamic period (eleventh-fourteenth centuries AD).[45] He is actually a *ḥanīf* king,[46]

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[37] According to the legend, she was Queen of Ethiopia. Her name is not attested in the historical accounts. Ibid., III.18.
[38] Ibid., III.25.
[39] Ibid., III.27.
[40] "*...λόγου δε προσπεσόντος διατριβης ενεκεν του ποτου διεληλυθότος ικανου χρόνου επέδωκεν Ιουλλος ετερον ποτήριον εχον το φάρμακον*" (= *when they began chatting because of the drink and after some time had passed, Ioullos gave [him] another glass with the poison*). Ibid., III.31.12
[41] Ibid., III.33.
[42] Ibid., III.35.
[43] See p. 81.
[44] About several basic aspects of the *Iskandarnāma*, see p.76.
[45] The text is based on tales retrieved from oral and literary traditions in late Sasanian and early Islamic periods. See Hanaway, 92 and idem, 'Eskandar-Nāmah', 611. About the name 'Iskandar', see A.A. Dihkhudā, 'Iskandar' in *Lughātnāma*, ed. M. Mu'īn (Tehran, 1339/1950).

ready to expand his faith to the edges of the world. That is why he campaigns and has various adventurous episodes in different parts of the world, such as Iran, India, the Arabian Peninsula, China, Spain and other places. He is the *dhu'l-qarnayn (the double-horned one)*, the one who built the Gate against the invading nations of Gog and Magog.[47] In the Persian popular mind Alexander is the half-brother of Dārā (Darius)[48] and the *dhu'l-qarnayn* of the *Qur'ān*[49] and this double identity is one of the most fundamental in the *Iskandarnāma.*[50] The text of the *Iskandarnāma* follows the main patterns of Firdawsī's account in respect to the incidents of Alexander's life, but inevitably, in contrast to the polite character of the *Shāhnāma*, the popular style of the *Iskandarnāma* adds many other realistic features to Alexander's personality. Hence, he is in some cases an indecisive and bumbling ruler with many human qualities, like love and lust.[51] The Alexander of the *Iskandarnāma* combines two natures: the divinely protected and the human.[52] This is a valuable source for the researcher who wants to trace the popular concept Persians held of Alexander at the time the text was written as well as in earlier times.

The research on the current content of the romance depends on the extent that this content has been preserved so far, and it is an interesting question whether this text, to the extent in which it has been preserved and edited, is a comprehensive synthesis of a previously longer romance.[53] Southgate thinks that it is an abridgement of a more extended prototype. She also supports the idea that the author decided to omit some sections of the whole number of Alexander stories known at that time in order to avoid extended length. That is why, according to Southgate, the author omitted incidents from Firdawsī's account of Alexander's life or uninteresting legendary stories of prophets from the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*.[54]

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[46] The one who possesses the one and true religion, *Qur'ān*, 10:105.
[47] *Qur'ān*, 18: 94, 97, 99; *IN* 507; Southgate, 116.
[48] B. Carra de Vaux, 'Dārā, Dārāb', *EI*^{2}, 2, 132-133; A. Tafazzoli, 'Dārāb, ii, Dārāb II', *EIr*, 7, 2.
[49] *Qur'ān*, 18: 83-98.
[50] Alexander is mentioned many times with this name in the *IN* 3:2, 5:8, 90:20, 96:7, 192:19, 211:8.
[51] Hanaway, 66-128; idem, 'Eskandar-Nāmah', 611; Southgate, 'Portrait of Alexander the Great', 278-284.
[52] See p.133, 151.
[53] *IN*, introd., 24-25; Southgate, 4.
[54] *Dhu 'l-qarnayn* is one of the most prominent prophetic figures in these numerous works which were written in prose or verse and dealt with the legends of pre-Islamic and other prophets (Moses, Solomon and others). The most popular original account in Persian was produced in the eleventh century AD by Nīshāpūrī, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (henceforth cited as *QA*), ed. H. Yaghmā'ī (Tehran, 1340/1961).

iii. The transitional period

Both *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account and the *Iskandarnāma* have many striking similarities, since they are romances, reflecting popular traditions. Due to the defective manuscript tradition, it is not possible to know the authors and the exact date that they were compiled for the first time. Technical difficulties emerge from the preservation of the Persian text. The beginning of the Tehran manuscript of the *Iskandarnāma* has been corrupted and a considerable part of it has been lost; another reason that could prevent the reader from learning the identity of the author would probably be the preference of the author or compiler to remain anonymous.

The *Iskandarnāma* belongs to the cycle of Alexander romances, a cycle originating from the Greek version (β).[55] Afshār's point about the relationship between the two accounts (the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* and *Iskandarnāma*) through the Arabic translation of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* Greek text must be considered valid in spite of the fact that the Arabic version is now lost and there is no direct evidence to support such a theory.[56] The Arabic version, however, was probably one of the sources that the compiler of the *Iskandarnāma* had consulted.

This analysis emphasises firstly the literary sequence from the time that the Greek version was written (late antiquity) until the Ghaznavid period when the *Iskandarnāma* of the anonymous author was first compiled;[57] secondly the inner connection of the two texts in the passing of time, despite the vast chronological gap that exists between them. This is achieved by examining and comparing the literary evidence of both texts.

The literary connection between the two texts

In order to prove the literary sequence between the two texts, it is necessary to go back to the pre-Islamic period and particularly the time that the Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance was created (third and fourth centuries AD). The

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[55] *IN*, 16; Hanaway, 9, 68.

[56] Several details such as the Arabic form of various names (for example the name of the Queen of Ethiopia Qaydhāfa, Gr. Kandake) denote a connection of the *Iskandarnāma* with an Arabic text from which it derived much of its material. See *IN*, introd., 24.

[57] *IN*, introd., 9; Hanaway, 100; Southgate, 2.

popular character of the romance is reflected in the contradicting elements of the narration. The supernatural and legendary part of the text is not characterized by uniformity. Many heterogeneous elements coexist: for example, mention is made a number of times of dragons coexisting with the eagle, classic symbols of royalty in the Graeco-Roman tradition. One other striking point is the coexistence of pre-Christian elements with the Christian view of the author concerning history, life and an approach towards reality.[58] These are some indications that the Greek text is the written evolution of an oral tradition that was formed gradually from the time of Alexander's life and reign until the fifth century AD. It is impossible for anyone to find the traces of this oral tradition before its compilation. However, due to its heterogeneous elements, the formation of the narrative never stopped and actually it is highly probable that there might have been other written forms of the same story and tradition in the same region.

What is available today is a written form of a widespread literary tradition in the Middle East, a form which was produced by an author. It is not baseless to presume that this written form reflects a common approach developed in this region about Alexander's life and character. This tradition was created in the lands where Alexander and his descendants had previously reigned. Hence, the ideas and the image of Alexander were formed and were under continuous formation and transformation all the time in popular oral tradition. However, the main feature of this account must have been the positive image of Alexander as a ruler. Undoubtedly, this image was not the same in every cultural context. The differences in this multicultural tradition were well depicted in the various versions (Greek, Syriac, Armenian and Ethiopic) of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition.[59] It is interesting that today there is no available written evidence of a Middle Persian version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* text. Since there is no clear evidence of what had been produced in a written form in the Sasanian Empire at that time, it is uncertain whether this version ever existed and only speculations can be made (see below). Despite the scarcity of evidence or even

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[58] The Greek version of Alexander's romance was written by a Christian and many elements of this work deal with the Christian cultural frame, for example the chronological system followed is the Alexandrian one. See *Ps.Call.*, III 35.10. In spite of the religious beliefs of the compiler-author, the pre-Christian elements are harmoniously connected with the ancient Greek tradition of the text, e.g. the correspondence between Alexander and Hippolyte, the chief of the Amazons. Ibid., III.25.

[59] For example, the Syriac version includes more details about Alexander's childhood, such as the fact that he went to war with Philip at the age of twelve and that his eyes were different from those of Philip and other examples. See *Syriac Version*, I.13; Hanaway, 71-72.

the complete lack of it. there are still points that need to be discussed regarding the tradition, oral and written, concerning Alexander in the land of Iranians in this particular period. For reasons analyzed below,[60] the Iranians probably created and preserved a vibrant oral tradition regarding Alexander and this tradition must be associated with the general cultural context and concept for Alexander at that time in the Middle East; this probably had a close connection with the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition.

The next step of this chapter is the analysis of the possible influence of the Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance on the Persian literary tradition in the Sasanian period and the development of a tradition related to the life and figure of Alexander.[61]

The Pahlavi version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance

According to Nöldeke, the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance of the Life of Alexander came from a Pahlavi translation during the late Sasanian period, a translation which has not been preserved until today. This Pahlavi version was the basis for the Syriac version[62] and Nöldeke's arguments are based on the possible Pahlavi linguistic influence traced in the Syriac text. For example certain place-names in Syriac are of Middle Persian origin (*'dwrbygn* = Adharbayjān, *swndyqy'* = Soghdian and others).[63] Nöldeke also refers to Pahlavi syntax and vocabulary which are obviously traceable in the Syriac text. Regarding the syntax, there is the striking case of addressing a high person in the plural, a Pahlavi phenomenon. With respect to the vocabulary, the names of the planets are explained in pure Middle Persian [Ares (Mars) -Wahrām, Nebo (Mercury) – Tīr, Balti (Venus) - Ānāhītā and others]. Furthermore, the use of the Pahlavi name for copper (parnūğ/g), rhinoceros (marqadad/bargadad) clearly show that the compiler was translating from a Pahlavi precedent.

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[60] p.36.

[61] M. Boyce, 'Middle Persian Literature', in *Handbuch der Orientalistik*, ed. B. Spuler, I.IV, ii (Leiden, 1968), 65.

[62] See the *Syriac version* (n.4). The Syriac version was translated later, although it is not known exactly when, into Arabic and later on into Amharic. See *IV*, introd., 16.18-21; Hanaway, 61.

[63] Th. Nöldeke, 'Beiträge zur Geschichte des Alexanderromans', *Denkschriften der Kaiserlichen Akademien der Wissenschaften, Phil-Hist. Klasse*, 38 (1890), 11-13.

The second part of Nöldeke's theory deals with the literary or folk character of the so-called 'Pahlavi version'. In this case he again uses the only material he has available, the Syriac text. He notices that there are in the Syriac text forms of names that mixed *-l-* and *-r-*.[64] He assumes that the confusion mentioned above is a result of the influence of written Pahlavi, a language that confuses *-l-* and *-r-*.[65] The sufficiently convincing argumentation of Nöldeke based on the phonetic features of the Syriac text includes dentals (τ and θ) and palatals (k and χ) regarding the Greek names.[66]

In Nöldeke's view, these examples indicate that the prototype was of polite origin and not folk. In this he supports the theory of the literary character of a probable Pahlavi version that was concealed behind the Syriac version. Actually he claims that by studying the Syriac text we can form a slight idea of what the Pahlavi version looked like. The theory of this prominent scholar has remained a leading one throughout the twentieth century up to the present time.[67]

After almost a century there has been a different approach to the same issue. Frye opposes both aspects of Nöldeke's theory.[68] With respect to the first part of that theory, Frye is favourable to the idea that a Pahlavi version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance never really existed and that the Syriac version came from a previous Syriac one which was translated from the Greek prototype. Frye replies to Nöldeke's arguments about the linguistic evidence and particularly the case of *-l-* and *-r–* by using other examples: the terms *drywš* for Darius,[69] *šwšn* for Susa[70] and others can by no means be derived from a Pahlavi text. Frye considers that the compiler of the Syriac version, who was probably a Nestorian Christian, had written down an oral tradition because of the great number of colloquial forms in the work.[71] He regards the variations in the Syriac text as the result of folklore influence.

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[64] *Syriac version*, 44, line 3.

[65] In the Pahlavi script there is a confusion of the liquids *l*, *r* and *n*, since for each one of them there are two signs. The first of these signs represents the three sounds above and the *w*. The second sign can be used in an ambiguous way for *l* and *r*.

[66] Nöldeke, *op.cit.*, 14.

[67] Hanaway, 68; However, Hanaway seems to have changed his approach on this issue after Frye had objected to a part of the arguments of Nöldeke in 1985. See idem, 'Eskandar-Nāmah', 611; also see Southgate, 2 and Macuch, *op.cit.*, 230-231.

[68] R.N. Frye, 'Two Iranian Notes' in *Papers in Honour of Professor Mary Boyce*, ed. A.D.H. Bivar and J.R. Hinnells (Leiden, 1985), 185-188.

[69] *Syriac version*, 77, line 8.

[70] Ibid., 236, line 12.

[71] Frye, *op.cit.*, 186

Regarding the second part of Nöldeke's theory, for Frye there is no issue at all because he does not agree that a Pahlavi translation of the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance ever existed.[72] One argument that he uses to prove the separate character of the two traditions is the difference related to basic details of Alexander's life. While in the Greek and Syriac version Alexander is the son of Nectenabo, in the Persian literary tradition he is the son of Dārāb II and brother of Dārā III Codomanus.[73] Therefore, if there were a contact, this important variation cannot be explained, since the Syriac version should follow the changed Pahlavi version regarding the basic details of Alexander's life. Frye concludes that the Syriac version was translated from an older Syriac version, based on the Greek text, and it was probably influenced by both an oral and literary Persian tradition. He rightly mentions that it is impossible to determine the details of such a process.[74]

A further analysis

From both above theories, it is clear that the case of the *Pahlavi version* remains open. Frye's arguments brought fresh air to the debate. However, Nöldeke's points of view remain basically intact and they have not lost their initial value and influence. It is impossible to decide and express firmly an opinion on this issue due to the lack of evidence. Both options remain open and only discoveries of new literary material could shed more light on this problem. However, based on the debate that has been produced so far, the current work can approach the issue of the oral and literary tradition from a different angle, that of the continuity of the Iranian tradition, oral and written, about Alexander's life.

It must be mentioned particularly that the presence of Middle Persian oral or written forms in the Syriac version strongly denotes that firstly there was an oral or written contact between the Iranian and the Graeco-Syriac traditions, and secondly that there must have been an Iranian oral or written tradition strong enough to influence the Syriac. These two points are of great significance for the development of the Iranian oral and literary tradition regarding the case of the *Alexander Romance*. This aspect leads to the idea that there was probably in Iran a transmission of the oral

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[72] In this case, the view that the Pahlavi version was the basis for the *rec. δ* which includes the Syriac, Arabic, Persian and Ethiopic versions is taken into consideration, Southgate, 168.
[73] Ibid., 187.
[74] Ibid., 188.

tradition with tales originating from the times of Alexander in Late Antiquity. With respect to the first point above, the interaction between the Iranian and the Graeco-Syriac traditions, there is no need to add anything further, since the presence of the Pahlavi elements detected in the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes Romance* is an obvious proof of this contact. The question, however, that remains open and unanswered is whether this contact was oral, literary or both. This question leads the discussion to the second point- the separate strong Iranian oral or written tradition - since the first case, that of a literary inter-cultural contact, depends on the literary status and tradition of the Iranians during the Sasanian period.[75] On this point, the so-called Pahlavi version plays an important, though not central, part.

Dealing with the second point and with respect to the topic of this research, the important task is not to find whether a Pahlavi translation of the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance ever existed but to define the role of the so-called "Pahlavi version" in the oral and literary traditions of the Sasanian era. The issue of the existence of a Pahlavi version is strongly related to the case of the transmission of Alexander's legend in the Iranian tradition. However, the legacy of the Pahlavi version must not be considered the only factor in this transmission in the Persian literary production of the early Islamic times (the *Iskandarnāma* is a classical token of this period).

Approaching the second point with regard to the Pahlavi version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, two options are available: either there was a Pahlavi version or it never existed. If a Pahlavi version existed, then this hypothesis leads to the further assumption that literary activity in the Sasanian period is strong enough to write down the non-Persian literary tradition regarding Alexander's life. Therefore, the influence of the Greek text of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance on the later Islamic Persian tradition of the *Shāhnāma* and *Iskandarnāma* becomes vital. Also other works, exclusively about Alexander or including him as part of a wider story, could have been created prior, during or just after Sasanian times; apparently they have not been preserved up today.[76] For modern scholars, the case of the Pahlavi version appears to be of great importance because of the general lack of evidence about the standard

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[75] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 65.

[76] Hanaway's view (94), reflecting that of Nöldeke, that the Iranians in Sasanian times knew some historical details about Alexander's past only through the Pahlavi version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* novel is questionable, since this assumption is based only on the supposition that there was a now lost Pahlavi version and no other work existed, since nothing indicates that Greek historical works were translated into Pahlavi.

written tradition of this period. However, the oral tradition was always strong on the Iranian plateau and nobody can draw any certain conclusions about the status of literary production in the early and middle Sasanian period.

If it is to decide whether a Pahlavi version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance ever existed, then it could be said that Nöldeke's arguments are strongly valid. In spite of Frye's sufficiently convincing approach, there is still a strong Iranian literary element in the Syriac version that cannot be neglected. Frye's argument (that, if the Pahlavi version had existed, then there is no explanation for the fact that Alexander's life in the Syriac version follows the Greek version and not the supposed Pahlavi version) can be reversed: it is not necessary for these kinds of prose works to be reliant on a specific text. The Nestorian Christian who probably compiled the Syriac version could have consulted more than one version (Pahlavi) and he could have made several combinations. Moreover, Frye's speculation that the story of Alexander's birth should have been transformed in the Pahlavi version is not entirely valid. It remains uncertain when exactly the version of the Persianized Alexander appeared in the pre-Islamic Iranian literary tradition. The Pahlavi version might have included several contradictory elements concerning Alexander in comparison to the Persian tradition about him during the Islamic period.

A linear approach to the Persian literary and oral traditions in pre-Islamic times

After having presented an analysis of the Pahlavi version, it is essential to contextualize it in the linear development of the pre-Islamic Iranian oral and literary epic traditions concerning Alexander's life. Thus, it will be possible to view the role of this tradition in connection with its subsequent influence on the formation of the *Khwadāynāmag* (=Book of Lords) and on the New Persian literary tradition of the Islamic period and particularly the *Shāhnāma*. In regard to the *Khwadāynāmag* it is suggested in the following lines that Alexander might have been incorporated with a positive profile in this account.[77] This idea is in contract with the well-established

[77] Gaillard also believes that Alexander was introduced in the *Khwadāynāmag* but she does not analyse which profile Alexander had. See Ṭarsūsī, *Alexandre le Grand en Iran, Le Dārāb Nāmeh d'Abū Tāher Tarsusi*, traduit et annoté par M. Gaillard (Paris, 2005), 14.

view that he was introduced in the *Khwadāynāmag* as an evil non-Iranian ruler.[78] The latter is the link of the pre-Islamic epic tradition with the works that were created afterwards; one of them is the prose text of the *Iskandarnāma*.

During the Hellenistic and Parthian periods an oral tradition must have been developed in the vast empire that Alexander bequeathed to his descendants. This tradition was not unified but had many products, according to the special geographical and cultural contexts where this tradition was developed, transmitted and preserved in subsequent centuries.[79] The Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance reflects the oral tradition which was developed about Alexander in the western parts of the Middle Eastern region under Greek rule. The Iranians must have also developed their own tradition regarding Alexander. Oral tradition, with some changes, is strongly preserved in the passing of time and the main part of this tradition remains intact.[80] The difficulty with the case of Alexander is that there is no evidence concerning Iranian literary and oral traditions during the centuries that followed the Alexandrian conquest (Hellenistic, Parthian, early Sasanian periods).

After Alexander's death, western Iran was ruled by the Greek Seleucid dynasty for almost 250 years. Eastern Iran was conquered by the Parthians in the mid-third century BC, while the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom in Central Asia continued to exist. The legitimacy of Greek rule in Iran was based on three factors: the promotion and emulation of the deified ruling image of Alexander, the model of the Greek city and the respect for the pre-existing Achaemenid administrative system.[81] Presumably, Alexander's image in the Seleucid kingdom was overwhelmingly preserved and it was probably at that time that an oral tradition was formed to preserve Alexander's positive image. This tradition was not restricted to the Greek population of Iran but it was also shared by Iranians, especially those who lived in urban areas and were in

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[78] G. Gnoli, *The Idea of Iran: An Essay on its Origin* (Rome, 1989), 124; Sh. Shahbazi, *Ferdowsi, A Critical Biography* (Harvard-California, 1991), 53, 67; idem, 'Irano-Hellenic Notes: 3. Iranians and Alexander,' *American Journal of Ancient History*, 2.1 (2003), 28-29.

[79] Frye, *op.cit.*, 187-188. For the importance of memorized tradition see J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History* (Nairobi, 1985), 13-15.

[80] In the *Nāma-yi Tansar* it is clearly stated that after the destruction of Persepolis and the archives of the Achaemenids and the Zoroastrian religion, the Zoroastrians had memorized the content of these texts and they transmitted them in the passing of time. The important detail, according to *Nāma-yi Tansar*, that these stories and legends had later been forgotten can be doubted because it is impossible for the author of the text to have had a thorough knowledge of the whole of the oral tradition in the vast extent of the *ērānshahr*. See *Nāma-yi Tansar*, ed. M. Mīnovī (Tehran, 1312/1933), 11; *The Letter of Tansar*, English trans. M. Boyce (Rome, 1968), 37.

[81] E. Venetis, 'Iran at the Time of Alexander the Great and the Seleucids', in *Iranian Civilization: From Antiquity to Present*, ed. T. Daryaee (Costa Mesa, 2006 - forthcoming).

daily contact with the Greek ruling system. A part of the rural Iranian population must have also adopted this oral tradition. A simultaneous negative tradition concerning Alexander must have also existed in the Fārs province, the religious and political cradle of Iran. Given that the political importance of Fārs in Seleucid times was minor, it is, however, questionable whether the negative tradition became popular outside Fārs.

The political propaganda of the Graeco-Bactrian kingdom must have favoured the positive oral tradition related to Alexander in eastern Iran which was culturally and politically different from the western Iranian world. The Parthians, who came from eastern Iran, were probably not familiar with the western Iranian political and cultural heritage of the Achaemenids. Thus, they legitimised their rule mostly through the Greek heritage in combination with their own eastern Iranian background.[82] Hence, it could be assumed that the Parthians promoted the positive tradition about Alexander and not his negative image which was associated with the Achaemenid past in Fārs. Before the emergence of the Sasanians, the political landscape in Iran certainly favoured the promotion of a positive oral tradition about Alexander.

The Sasanian dynasty brought the so-called "Persian Renaissance" and tried successfully to re-Iranize the political and cultural order in Iran. According to one theory, the Zoroastrian tradition regarding Alexander found prosperous ground and it was supported by the Fārs-based Sasanian dynasty in order to promote their imperial agenda against the Romans.[83] According to another theory, the Iranians during the Sasanian period did not have a sufficiently strong memory of Alexander.[84]

Both these theories are brought into question by the possibility that the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes Romance* was translated in Pahlavi in the mid-Sasanian period. This translation denotes the interest of the Sasanians in Alexander's life. If they had had a totally negative image, then it would have been pointless for them to have it translated and to adopt the positive Greek tradition about his legendary life. This Pahlavi translation implies that there was already a positive oral tradition about Alexander in Iran and, as shown above, this tradition must have been associated with

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[82] J. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD*, English trans. A. Azudi (London-New York, 2001), 133-134.
[83] G. Gnoli, 'La demonizzazione di Allesandro nell'Iran sasanide (III-VII d.C) e nella tradizione zoroastriana', in *Alessandro Magno, Storia e mitto*, ed. L. Arte (Roma, 1995), 174-175.
[84] Nöldeke, *op.cit.*, 34.

political developments in pre-Sasanian Iran. In spite of the strong influence of the Zoroastrian tradition on Sasanian Iran, there might have been a secular epic tradition which reflected Alexander's positive profile. The Pahlavi translation of the Pseudo-Callisthenes romance further boosted the pre-existing positive oral tradition about Alexander and influenced the compilation of the *Khwadāynāmag*. This point is in contrast with the general view that Alexander was incorporated with a negative profile in the *Khwadāynāmag* and the tradition of Iranian kings. The suggested secular oral tradition coexisted with the Zoroastrian version. Moreover, how could the Iranians not have preserved the memory of Alexander, when their own clergy perfectly preserved his image in the Zoroastrian tradition?

In contrast to the Muslim literary tradition which has created a positive image for the personality of Alexander, the Zoroastrian tradition in the Pahlavi language presents a totally negative image of Alexander.[85] It must be noted that Alexander is not the central figure of these works but he is briefly mentioned in the sequence of the narration and the stories, when it is necessary. In spite of the brief character of these references, they nevertheless succeed in reflecting the concept that the Zoroastrians had for Alexander in pre-Islamic times. According to the late Pahlavi accounts, Zoroastrians keep a negative attitude towards him because of his aggressive policy against Zoroastrianism.[86] This negative attitude of the Zoroastrian literary tradition of the Sasanian period is easy to understand and probably reflects a possible effort on the part of Alexander to diminish the strength of the Zoroastrian priesthood.[87] However, the content of the very much later Pahlavi texts does not agree with the earlier historical account of Arrian who presents a positive image of Alexander regarding his

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[85] Y. Yamanaka, 'From Evil Destroyer to Islamic Hero: The Transformation of Alexander the Great's Image in Iran', *AJAMES*, 8 (1993), 65-70.

[86] In a passage from the *Nāma-yi Tansar (=The Book of Tansar, 550-570 AD)* it is mentioned that Alexander burned in Persepolis 12,000 ox hides with Zoroastrian sacred texts. See *Nāma-yi Tansar*, 11; In the *Kārnāmag-ī Ardashīr-i Bābakān (The Book of the Deeds of Ardashīr the Son of Bābak, 600 AD)* Alexander is a legendary figure belonging to the party of the enemies of Iran along with Ḍaḥḥāk and Afrāsiyāb. See *Kārnāmag-i Ardashir-i Bābakān*, ed. and trans. A. Kasravī (Tehran, 1307/1928), 41; In the *Ardā-vīrāznāmag (=The Book of the Righteous Vīrāz, ninth century AD)* Alexander is presented as an agent of Ahrimān, the absolute power of evil. See *Ardā-vīrāznāmag*, ed. and trans. M. Mu'īn (Tehran, 1326/1947), 1; The same image with more details is met in *Zand-Āgāsīh* (Iranian or Greater Bundahishn, eighth-twelfth centuries) where Alexander brings complete disaster to *ērānshahr* and the Zoroastrian religion. See *Zand-Ākāsīh, Iranian or Greater Bundahishn*, transliteration and English trans. B.T. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1956), 275-277; R. C. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London, 1961), 25; S. Ḥ. Ṣafavī, *Iskandar va adabīyāt-i īrān* (Tehran, 1364/1985), 24-31.

[87] Wiesehöfer, *op.cit.*, 106 supports a similar idea; Also see E. Fredricksmeyer, 'Alexander and the Kingship of Asia' in *Alexander the Great in Fact and Fiction*, ed. A.B. Bosworth and E. J. Baynham (Oxford, 2000), 149-150; also see Zaehner, *op.cit.*, 22.

attitude towards the Magi and the Zoroastrian religion.[88] It is difficult to have a clear opinion on the issue of the attitude of Alexander towards the Zoroastrian religion. This conflicting information about Alexander coming from the ancient Greek and the Zoroastrian sources does not necessarily only mean that each side presented the past influenced by the political developments in the Graeco-Roman world and Iran respectively. It may be assumed that Alexander probably pursued a diplomatic policy towards the Zoroastrian priesthood, by being both favourable to those priests who accepted his sovereignty, and unfavourable to these priests who were hostile towards his rule.

The mention of the Pahlavi literary tradition at this point of the analysis aims to connect it with the issue of the memory that the Iranians had of Alexander during the Sasanian period. It is obvious that the Zoroastrian priesthood, which had the exclusive prerogative over the script in the Sasanian Empire, had a negative attitude towards Alexander.[89] Therefore, the script as a source of information, although restricted, reflects the knowledge and opinion of the Zoroastrians about Alexander in the Sasanian period.[90] It is difficult to believe that the figure of Alexander was remote for Iranians in the Sasanian era.

The question that emerges then is how to explain the contrast between the Pahlavi and the later Muslim literary epic traditions regarding Alexander. Is it possible to believe that the negative attitude of the Zoroastrian sources represented the only view and tradition about Alexander during the Sasanian period? The fact that there was a clear Zoroastrian attitude towards Alexander denotes that there was a sequence in the historical memory of the Iranians in late antiquity. The lack of any ancient Iranian historical work and tradition does not exclude the possibility of the existence of such a sequence. In Sasanian Iran there must have been mainly two traditions concerning Alexander, a negative and a positive. The negative is identified with the Zoroastrian view and the positive was probably of secular and folk character.

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[88] At the banquet of reconciliation between the various political powers of the Achaemenid Empire (at Opis, 324 BC) Alexander employed Persian *magi* for his Persian comrades implying perhaps the aim of Alexander to keep a positive attitude towards the Zoroastrian religion. See Arrian, 7.11.8.

[89] E.G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, 4 vols., vol. 2: *From the Earliest Times until Firdawsī* (London, 1902), 118.

[90] The fact that the only Pahlavi sources that have been preserved so far date back to the post-Sasanian period (eighth–ninth centuries AD) does not diminish the validity of the above argument because these mainly religious accounts were composed according to pre-existing Pahlavi written accounts and the powerful oral tradition amongst the Zoroastrian priests.

As mentioned in the *Nāma-yi Tansar*,[91] the role of the storytellers and the memorization of legends and stories from the past were vital for the preservation of the traditions and culture of Iranians under foreign rule. Next to the religious literary tradition there must have been an oral epic tradition which probably contradicted the Zoroastrian view.

The role of this oral epic tradition was vital for the creation of the Iranian epic tradition during the Late Sasanian period and particularly during the reigns of Khusraw I Anūshīrwān (531-579) or Khusraw II Parwīz (589-628) or Yazdgird III (532-551).[92] But this oral tradition was not the only source for the compilation of a written epic account since there were many written genealogies and brief chronicles about the origin of the Iranians as well as other material originating in antiquity.[93] These probably formed the material for the compilation of an epic tradition about the Iranian Kings; the so-called *Khwadāynāmag* (*Book of the Kings*). Unfortunately, this important work was not preserved either in Pahlavi or in translation. However, much information and details about it are drawn from certain Arabic texts as well as the *Shāhnāma*. A comparison of these accounts could provide a general picture of what the *Khwadāynāmag* looked like in the past. Although the Zoroastrian element has been diminished in the Muslim versions of the *Khwadāynāmag*, it is widely believed that its Pahlavi form was written by Zoroastrian priests but, as shown below, this might not have been the case.[94]

The compilation of the *Khwadāynāmag* contributed in a catalytic way to the formation of the Persian epic and 'national' tradition during the late Sasanian period and particularly in the Islamic period. One of its main features is that it had a purely secular character in contrast to the traditional religious style of the Pahlavi works. Through this work there was an attempt by the Sasanian dynasty to create a written

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[91] See n. 114 above.

[92] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 57-58; During the reign of the Sasanian king Khusraw I Anūshīrwān (531-579 AD) there was a serious literary and cultural effort to promote *belles lettres* and sciences in the Iranian world. It was probably at that period of time that the scholars of the Sasanian king created a collection of stories and legends about the kings of the legendary and ancient history of Iran, setting the base for the creation of the Iranian national epic by Firdawsī. See T. Nöldeke, *The Iranian National Epic*, trans. L.Th. Bogdanov (Philadelphia, 1979), 23; The collection of Iranian tales and legends concerning the epic past of Iran from the ancient period until the reign of Khusraw II Parwīz (589-628 AD) was compiled in Pahlavi in the form of *Khwadāy Nāmag* during the reign of the last Sasanian king Yazdgird III (632-651); also see Nöldeke, *op.cit.*, 24.

These oral tales and legends were probably the main reason for the creation of the different accounts and details concerning the Syriac version. See Hanaway, 'Eskandar-Nāmah', 609.

[93] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 57.

[94] Ibid., 58.

genealogy as a proof of the unbroken chain of Iranian kings in history, from the legendary times of Pīshdādiān and Kiāniān to the Arsacides and Sasanians (to the Sasanian king Khusraw II Parwīz, 589-628).[95] This work is known for its lack of critical examination of the sources that were consulted for its compilation. Many mistakes and inaccuracies with regard to the dates and names of several kings are evidence of the nature of the staff that carried out this task: they were priests with insufficient methodology and knowledge of the past.[96] Their information was based mainly on the oral tradition (brief chronicles) and various genealogies of kings. In spite of these features, the compilation of this work was an achievement for its time. The accumulation of this vast and scattered material was enough for the Sasanians to justify their origin and their legitimate right to the throne of the Iranians. Broadly speaking, it was the cornerstone for the creation of a written Iranian epic tradition.[97] It is uncertain whether it should be considered a representative token of the literary epic tradition that was developed in the late Sasanian period, but it must be seen as an intimate part of this tradition.

Among the sources that the compilers of the *Khwadāynāmag* had consulted was probably the Middle Persian version of Alexander's romance.[98] It is very interesting to see how the Zoroastrian priesthood dealt with the issue of incorporating materials which promoted Alexander's positive image, something that was not in accordance with the Zoroastrian tradition that approached Alexander as an evil ruler. This question is fundamental to the interpretation of the positive profile of Alexander in the Iranian literary tradition in Islamic times.

Given that the relations between the Sasanian king and the Zoroastrian clergy were not harmonious (especially in the late Sasanian period), it must be assumed that the Zoroastrian clergy were forced to compromise with the royal and secular order for the compilation of a work that would present an unbroken sequence of Iranian kings throughout history.[99] Furthermore, several aspects of the oral tradition existing at that period probably enforced the decision to incorporate a positive profile, and even a Persianized Alexander in the epic account, and not the "evil" one of the Zoroastrian

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[95] Nöldeke, *op.cit.*, 23; Hanaway, 92; Gaillard, *Alexandre le Grand en Iran*, 13-17.
[96] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 59.
[97] Hanaway, 92-93.
[98] Nöldeke, 'Beiträge', 12.
[99] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 58-59.

tradition.[100] Presumably, this decision was not made up only in terms of raw political aims by the Sasanian authorities, as Browne implies.[101] There existed already an oral tradition which was favourable to Olympias' son and was in accordance with the political aims of the late Sasanians. The influence of the oral tradition probably forced the Sasanians to fuse the religious Pahlavi tradition and the secular oral tradition about the figure of Alexander. Perhaps it was the decision of the political authorities that the echo of such a compilation should not be unfamiliar to the public. This work was created not only for the upper classes of Iranian society but it also aimed to consolidate the legitimacy of the Sasanian dynasty in the minds of their aristocratic subjects.

It has been also stated that there might have been more than one versions of the *Khwadāynāmag:* a priestly, a royal and another for the aristocracy of Iran.[102] This argument also enforces the possibility that the profile of Alexander could have been positive in one or two (royal and aristocratic) of these three presumable versions. The incorporation of Alexander in the Iranian epic tradition with a positive image during the late Sasanian period seems to have been the result of the long and gradual formation of the literary and oral traditions concerning the legendary figure of Alexander in the Middle East in combination with the sudden and automatic action of the political demands of that period. Though the political factor is not underestimated, the political initiative of the incorporation of Alexander in the Iranian epic tradition was based on a pre-existing image. The political pragmatism of the Sasanians, who were aware of the popularity of Alexander's legend, was the main reason for the adoption of their favourable approach towards Alexander.

The above analysis deals with the polite literary production in Sasanian times, a production based on rules and techniques. As for the prose works and the role of Alexander in this production, not much can be said. The written prose works in the late Sasanian period flourished especially due to external influence, and in particular that of the Indian tradition.[103] They were works aiming to entertain the court and

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[100] His inclusion in the *Khwadāynāmag* could have initiated or was the result of his Persianization process. Within the same process, his mother, Olympias, was also Persianized and acquired the name 'Nāhīd', see E. Venetis, 'The Persianization of Olympias in Medieval Persian Literature', (in Greek), *EC*, 38 (2004), 450-453.

[101] Browne, *op.cit.*, 118-119; Boyce seems to adopt the same view, presenting the compilation process as lacking a critical approach to the sources, which is true up to a point. See Boyce, *op.cit.*, 59.

[102] A.Sh. Shahbazi, "On the Xwaday-namag" in *Acta Iranica* 30 [=Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater], (Leiden 1990), 215-218.

[103] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 64-65; Hanaway, 62-63.

mainly the upper classes; but some of these versions must have also reached other levels of Sasanian society. The flourishing of prose works designed for entertainment was the result of the translation of non-Iranian works of this kind. The most well known are the Hellenistic romance *Vāmiq u 'Adhrā* and the Indian romances of *Sindbādnāma*, *Tūtīnāma*, *Balauhar wa Būdāsaf* and, of course, the famous *Kalīla wa Dimna.*[104] The tradition of prose works was particularly developed in the late Sasanian period and a new literary genre was created, a species that would influence prose works in Iran during the classical period of Islam in medieval times.[105]

Regarding the case of Alexander, if a prose work about his life had ever existed in Sasanian times, the discussion goes back to the issue of the Pahlavi version of Alexander's romance. It is uncertain whether there was even a brief written work about him. It must be presumed that many oral stories with various versions circulated in the Sasanian Empire regarding Alexander. The tradition of story-telling was highly developed amongst the Iranians and particularly at the royal court. There was a rich repertoire which enabled the story-tellers to choose every time the kind of story they considered appropriate.[106] Besides, the presence of Alexander in the *Khwadāynāmag* is useful evidence of his presence in the memory of the Iranians and the fact that he was incorporated in what was, to the standards of that time, such a serious written account denotes that Alexander was popular in the mind of many Iranians.

On the whole, the issue of Alexander`s presence in the memory of the Iranians throughout the Sasanian period remains a key point for the interpretation of their attitude towards him in the written tradition of Islamic Iran. In spite of the lack of sources, there are slight indications (*Khwadāynāmag, the Pahlavi and the Syriac versions*) of a lively oral tradition referring to the figure of Alexander in the Iranian cultural context of the period. There must have been a variety of stories about Alexander. Two of these remained probably prominent throughout the Sasanian period; the negative Zoroastrian written tradition and the positive oral tradition. This dichotomy (positive vs. negative) in the Iranian world during the Sasanian period concerning the image of Alexander does not seem so unlikely. In the struggle between these strands, the foreign literary influence (Greek, Syriac) was important in the context of the Iranian oral tradition (the Pahlavi tradition remained obviously

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[104] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 65.
[105] A.J. Arberry, *Classical Persian Literature* (London, 1958), 181-182.
[106] Boyce, *op.cit.*, 65.

unchanged) and favoured the strengthening of the already existing positive image of Alexander. It was the political purposes of the Sasanians, based on the popularity of the figure of Alexander amongst their subjects, that led them to the decision to incorporate Alexander officially in the written Iranian epic cycle of kings and to connect him in an inventive way (by making him an Iranian in origin) with the glorious past and civilization of the Iranians. However, in unofficial daily life, the legendary figure of Alexander might have already been adopted in the popular mind in the pre-Islamic, and in particular, in the Sassanian period. Therefore, the wide-spread "sudden and imposed introduction" of Alexander[107] into the epic cycle of Iran for political reasons does not seem realistic. Browne tried to justify, in a simplistic way, perplexing issues, such as the case of Alexander, based on no particular evidence. This kind of cultural connection and syncretism is more striking in the Persian literature of the Islamic period.

IV. The early Islamic Period

Alexander's literary and oral traditions did not cease to spread in the Middle East after the fall of the Sasanian dynasty. The establishment of Islam in these lands contributed to the promotion of a positive image of Alexander. The particular interest that the Arabs showed for *belles-lettres* and sciences led them to a literary renaissance which had as one of its aims the transmission of pre-Islamic secular knowledge into the *dār al-Islām* through translations.[108] During the beginning of this process (in al-Ma'mūn's time, 813-833 A.D),[109] several Pahlavi and Syriac sources concerning Alexander are translated into Arabic and therefore the motifs and tradition of late antiquity related to Alexander are incorporated into the Muslim tradition of the Abbasid caliphate.[110] During the Sāmānid period the florescence of Persian literature

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[107] Browne, *op.cit.*, 119.

[108] The *bayt al-ḥikma* (The House of Wisdom) in Baghdad was the centre of this literary effort. See D. Gutas, *Greek Thought Arabic Culture* (London–New York, 1998), 53-60. The role of the Syriac cultural heritage was of fundamental importance for the efforts of the Arabs to accumulate as much knowledge as possible from other cultural contexts (Graeco-Roman, Indian, Chinese). Most of the prominent figures in this process were Syrians with a bilingual, or even multilingual, background. See Browne, *op.cit.*, 305.

[109] Arberry, *op.cit.*, 16.

[110] On the now lost Arabic version, see the remarks of Fahd about the case for its existence. T. Fahd, 'La version arabe du Roman d'Alexandre', *Graeco-Arabica*, 4 (1991), 27-31; Doufikar- Aerts, ' "Les derniers jours d'Alexandre" ', 61-73; eadem, '*The Last Days of Alexander* in an Arabic Popular Romance of al-Iskandar', in S. Panayotakis *et al.*, 23-35.

in eastern Iran must have contributed to the development of Alexander's legendary image in amongst the Persians and his incorporation in the New Persian literary tradition.[111] Actually Alexander becomes a part of the Islamic tradition and, according to some theologians and researchers, he is the *'double-horned one'* (*dhu'l-qarnayn*) figure mentioned in the *Qur'ān*.[112] In spite of the scholarly dispute over the association between the *dhu'l-qarnayn* and Alexander, the positive profile of the latter became widely accepted in the Islamic world, both in the Arabic and Iranian cultural contexts.[113] This profile is that of the fused Muslim Iranian king, following the pattern of Perso-Islamic fusion of the past in eastern Iran this period.[114]

In this chapter two aspects of the evolutionary process regarding the figure of Alexander in the Islamic literary and oral context will be presented, the main Muslim historiographical sources for Alexander and the Iranian epic prose tradition before the *Iskandarnāma*. From the two, the latter is the more vital for the current research, because the *Iskandarnāma* is the descendant of this epic tradition in Iranian culture. However, a brief analysis of the Muslim historiographical accounts is also essential, because it is important material from the Islamic tradition about Alexander, a tradition that will become the background for the further development of the Iranian Islamic tradition in epic poetry and prose texts. A brief analysis of the Islamic historiographical tradition will be the prelude to an analysis of the epic prose accounts in the early Islamic period.[115]

The Muslim accounts

As has been mentioned, Muslim literature, either Arabic or Persian, unlike the Pahlavi tradition, maintains a positive attitude towards Alexander's reputation. Amongst the Iranians, Alexander is glorified for his deeds, and his war against Darius is considered a righteous one.[116] Alexander appears in five categories of Muslim

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[111] For the support of the Sāmānids to Persian literature, see J. Scott Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, (Edinburgh, 1999), 16-18.
[112] *Qur'ān*, 18:83-98.
[113] Macuch, 'PseudoCallisthenes Orientalis', 224-225; about his figure in the Islamic literary tradition, particularly in the Maghrib, see Ch. Genequand, 'Sagesse et pouvoir: Alexandre en Islam', in *The Problematics of Power. Eastern and Western Representations of Alexander the Great*, ed. M. Bridges and J.Ch. Bürgel (Geneva, 1995), 125-133; A.M. Piemontese, 'La figura di Alessandro nelle letterature d'area islamica', in *Alessandro Magno. Storia e mitto*, ed. L. Arte (Roma, 1995), 177-178.
[114] See p.162.
[115] See p.52.
[116] Southgate, 190-191.

accounts: in the Qur'ān (identified as *dhu'l-qarnayn*); in several folk stories influenced by Greek and Indian literary traditions (for example *Sindbād the Sailor*); in a third category of accounts: the *Sirr al-asrār* (*Secret of Secrets*, letters addressed to Alexander by Aristotle) by Yaḥyā b. Bitrīq (d. 815) and the *Sayings of the Philosophers* by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (809-873) in which he appears as author of wise sayings. A fourth category of accounts is those of anecdotes and exempla in works such as those of Ghazzālī. The fifth category is that of full-length narratives (historical accounts, prose romances, poems) with Alexander as protagonist.[117] The sources of influence for these accounts were more or less the same as those of the romances: the Arabic legendary material for *dhu'l-qarnayn*, the Syriac literary production (*Pseudo-Callisthenes*" Syriac version etc.), the *Qur'ān* and the pre-Islamic Persian sources.[118] From the above five categories of accounts, the historiographic accounts need to be analyzed since they, more than the other categories above, often share common stories with those of Persian Alexander narratives, either in prose or in verse.

Al-Dīnawarī's work (ninth century AD) reflects the later Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*. The interesting point of his narration is that he mentions the dispute about Alexander`s ancestry. He says that Iranians consider Alexander to be of Iranian origin and in particular as the son of Dārāb b. Bahman and the daughter of Philip, King of Macedon. Alexander is presented as an oppressive king who changed his manners after his meeting with Aristotle.[119] One of the elements that connects al-Dīnawarī's narration with the *Shāhnāma* is the incident of Alexander`s response to Dārā, when the latter asks him to pay tribute: *"The hen"*, Alexander said, *"that produced the golden eggs had died"*.[120] According to his narration, Alexander`s death takes place in Jerusalem and his body is placed in a gold coffin.[121]

Ṭabarī`s (839-923 AD) *"History of Prophets and Kings"*,[122] the most reliable historiographical account of the early Islamic period, also describes Alexander with negative features, presenting him as a destroyer and oppressive king. He uses several sources for the composition of his account. His fourth account gives the Iranian aspect

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[117] Piemontese, 'La figura di Alessandro', 176-183; R. Stoneman, 'Alexander the Great in the Arabic Tradition', in S. Panayotakis *et al.*, 3-4.
[118] J. Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature* (Dordrecht, 1968), 58.
[119] Southgate, 191.
[120] Firdawsī, 6, Dārāb, 36.
[121] Ibid., 39.
[122] Al-Ṭabarī, *Tā'rikh al-rusul wa 'l-mulūk, The ancient kingdoms*, vol. 4, trans. and ann. M. Perlmann, Bibliotheca Persica (New York, 1987), 87-95.

of his origin.[123] According to al-Ṭabarī's narration. Alexander makes sure that all the Persian books on several scientific fields will be translated into Greek. He destroys many Iranian cities and explores several remote lands such as India, China and the Land of Darkness. His death takes place in Babylon at the age of 33.[124]

In al-Mas'ūdī's narration (d. 943 AD),[125] Alexander is the son of Philip and he is not associated with the Iranian royal cycle. Al-Mas'ūdī pays more attention to the events pertaining to India, Turkistān, China and Tibet. One important addition in his work is Alexander's letter to the Indian king Kayd. This is also attested in the *Shāhnāma*[126] and it is not mentioned in the Greek tradition. It is probably an element derived from the secular legendary Pahlavi tradition about Alexander.[127] In Niẓāmī's work the same episode is of much shorter length.[128] Al-Mas'ūdī's narration is important because it proves that both the historical accounts and the Persian epic prose works of the Islamic period draw their material from the same sources.

Al-Iṣfahānī (893-970 AD) presents his material reflecting the Zoroastrian tradition.[129] His brief account gives a negative image of Alexander's reign by stating that he maintained a harsh attitude towards the Persian nobility. He points out that, although he had built twenty cities, he had destroyed many others.[130] It is obvious that his historical account followed the Zoroastrian approach to the life of Alexander through the translations of previous religious Pahlavi works he had consulted.

Bal'amī's (d. 936 AD) Persian translation of Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh* makes some changes to the original text and in particular adopts the Persian origin of Alexander regarding his birth.[131] In essence Bal'amī transformed al-Ṭabarī's historical account of Alexander into a brief Alexander romance.[132]

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[123] Ṭabarī, *op.cit.*, 90; M.M. Mazzaoui, 'Alexander the Great and the Arab Historians', *Graeco-Arabica*, 4 (1991), 36-37.

[124] Alexander's age was between 30 and 33, when he died, and not 36, as Southgate, incorrectly, points out (219, n.29). Alexander was actually born in October 356 and he passed away on 10/11 June 323. See Arrian, VII.28, 297 (ns. 1 and 2, 296); Justin, 12.16.1. According to the *Ps.Call.'s* account, *Alexander lived 32 years*: "*εζησε δε ο Αλέξανδρος ετη λβ*' " (III.35.7).

[125] Mas'ūdī, Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī, *Murūj al-dhahab wa ma'ādin al-jawhar*, trans. as *Les Prairies d'Or* by C. Barbier de Meynard (Paris, 1829), vol. 2:129; Mazzaoui, *op.cit.*, 37-39.

[126] Mas'ūdī, *op.cit.*, 260; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, 158.

[127] Southgate, 194.

[128] Niẓām al-Dīn Ilyās Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *Sharafnāma*, ed. V. Dastgirdī (Tehran, 1335/1956), 358-365.

[129] Al-Iṣfahānī, *Ta'rīkh sinī mulūk al-'arḍ wa 'l-anbiyā'*, ed. Gottwaldt (Beirut n.d).

[130] Ibid, 29.

[131] Bal'amī, Abū 'Alī Muḥammad b. Muḥammad, *Ta'rīkh-i Bal'amī*, ed. M.T. Bahār and M.P. Gunābādī (Tehran, 1321/1942).

[132] Southgate, 195. Concerning a debate on Bal'amī's modifications see E.L. Daniel, 'Bal'amī's account of Early Islamic History', in *Culture and memory in medieval Islam. Essays in Honour of Wilfred Madelung*, ed. F. Daftary and J. W. Meri (London, 2003), 165; see also E.E. Bertels, *Roman ob*

Al-Bīrūnī's (973-1048 AD) *Athār al-bāqiya*[133] gives a fairly neutral account of Alexander and he is the only Muslim author who approaches the figure of Alexander through the Greek tradition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*. He attempts to give answers to several issues including the origin of Alexander. He is the only Muslim author who gives an account of the wars of Alexander in Greece before Alexander's invasion of the Achaemenid Empire.[134] His narration follows the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* linear model of conquests. However, these events have been enriched by several elements taken from the pre-Islamic Iranian as well as the Islamic tradition. His critical approach on the issue of Alexander's birth and origin presents the Persian version but only in order to reject it and to interpret it as a result of ignorance on the part of previous scholars.[135] In his other work, *India,* Bīrūnī also refers to the Egyptian version of Alexander's origin (Nectenabo).[136]

Later on, in the twelfth century, Alexander is presented as an idealized figure by Ibn al-Balkhī.[137] In the *Fārsnāma,* Alexander is a ruler full of wisdom, generosity and knowledge. The author attributes Alexander's invasion of Iran to a consequence of wrong policies adopted by Dārā. Alexander is forced to attack Iran and this movement, although hostile to the Iranians, is counterbalanced by his righteous reign and benevolent administration.[138] The development of a positive image of the Islamic tradition concerning Alexander is quite obvious and is depicted in the *Fārsnāma*.

The anonymous author of the *Majmu'l-tawārīkh wa 'l-qiṣaṣ*(1130)[139] gives the version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* for the birth of Alexander, a unique example in the literary tradition of the Islamic period. Bakhtyanūs (Nectenabūs), the king of Egypt and a sorcerer, takes refuge in the court of Philip of Macedon and there he manages to seduce Mofīd (Olympias) and the fruit of this seduction is Alexander.[140]

Aleksandre i ego glavnye versii na vostoke (The Alexander Romance and its main versions in the east) (Moscow, 1948), 19-20.

[133] Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī, *Athār al-bāqiya wa'l-qurūn al-khālīya*, trans. into Persian A. Dānāsirisht (Tehran, 1321/1942); idem, *The Chronology of Ancient Nations*, ed. and trans. C.E. Sachau (London, 1879).

[134] *idem*, trans. Sachau, 43.

[135] Ibid., 49.

[136] *idem*, *Al-Biruni's India*, ed. and trans. E. Sachau, 2 vols. (New Delhi, 1964), 96-97.

[137] Ibn al-Balkhī, *Fārsnāma*, ed. G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson [(London, 1921), rep. 1962].

[138] Ibid., 57-58.

[139] See *MT*.

[140] Ibid., 31. In this work Mufīd is the daughter of Philip, while in the Greek tradition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance she is Philip's wife. See *Ps.Call.*, I.10.2.

Ibn al-Athīr's account of Alexander is almost identical, word for word, to that of al-Ṭabarī's *Ta'rīkh*.[141] In this work Alexander makes peace with the King of China, because the latter approached Alexander disguised as a messenger and had a great impact on Alexander. An essential portion of Ibn al-Athīr's account is the correspondence of Alexander with Aristotle on governmental issues. The name of Aristotle is not given but his identity is implied through the use of the noun *mu'allim (=teacher)*.

On the whole, this short analysis of the historiographical accounts of the early Islamic period provides an overall picture of the approach to Alexander's personality. The figure of Alexander is not the same in these works and it depends every time on the literary and oral sources that each author has used in order to compose his account. In general, the Muslim historical accounts, except that of Iṣfahānī who gives a negative picture and Ibn al-Balkhī, providing an uncritically favourable one, maintain a fairly positive attitude towards Alexander's reign and figure.

The epic prose works

The epic prose works of the early Islamic period draw attention to the literary connection between the pre-Islamic and Islamic literary production. The rich Iranian written tradition, the epic polite and popular prose works during the late Sasanian period have a great impact on the development of literary genres in Arabic.[142] However, this tradition leaves nothing but a few remnants. After the Arab conquest, most of the Pahlavi accounts are destroyed but some others are translated into Arabic or Syriac. These accounts are preserved in terms of content but not in the original extent and form.[143] Moreover, the memory and oral tradition in the Iranian lands plays

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[141] Mazzaoui, *op.cit.*, 39.

[142] Arberry, *op.cit.*, 14-15.34.

[143] The following works are translated by Ibn al-Muqaffa' from Pahlavi into Arabic: *Kitāb Mazdak*, *Kitāb Khudāynāma* and *Kitāb al-Tāj fī Sirat Anūshīrāwān*. Besides Ibn al-Muqaffa', several other scholars translated Pahlavi books into Arabic, such as 'Alī b. 'Ubayda Rayḥānī (*Kitāb 'l ashraf al-Malik*), Sahī b. Ḥarūn (*Kitāb al-Wamiq wa 'l-Aḍra*), Jabala b. Sālim (*Kitāb Rustam wa Isfandyār*, *Kitāb Shūs*) etc.

In the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, some works (*Akhbār-i Farāmarz*, *Akhbār Sam* and *Kitāb-i Garshasp*) are mentioned as having been translated into Arabic but it is uncertain whether they were translated from Pahlavi or were written from the beginning in Persian. See *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. M.T. Bahār (Tehran, 1314/1935), 1, 5, 7.

an important role in the preservation of the written tradition of the Sasanians.[144] Through the process of combining written (through translations) and oral traditions (story-telling), the prose and epic works that contain material about the life of Alexander are transmitted from the pre-Islamic to the Islamic literary tradition equally by the Iranians and Arabs.

In the second century A.H./eight century A.D, *Khwadāynāmag* is translated from Pahlavi into Arabic by Ibn Muqaffa'.[145] From this translation a number of other translations are produced during the early Islamic period and there is a literary process which leads to the evolution of new versions of the translated epic. In some cases, the result of every translation is different, since there is a comparison and synthesis of several versions of the translated *Khwadāynāmag* in one body.[146]

The next step takes place in the fourth century AH/tenth century AD and it is the compilation of the *Old Preface to the Shāhnāma.*[147] This occurs in Khurāsān (city of Ṭūs) and is the result of the co-operation of several Zoroastrian scholars and dihqāns, mainly from the area of Khurāsān, under the patronage of 'Abd al-Razzāq of Ṭūs and his vizier al-Mu'amarī.[148] Most of the sources that are used for the compilation of this *Old Introduction* and mentioned in the introduction of that work have not been preserved. However, the names of the sources are known to the present researcher and provide him with the valuable image of a great range of sources dealing with the Iranian epic past which Firdawsī is aware of before writing his epic.[149]

Firdawsī derives the main part of the material for his work from the Pahlavi text *Khwadāynāmag*, its Arabic translation and the prose text of the *Shāhnāma* by Abū Manṣūr b. 'Abd al-Razzāq.[150] He is aware of several other literary sources, in the

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Some other works that have also been lost are *Akhbār-i Narimān, Akhbār Kay-Kubād, Akhbār-i Luhrasp, Akhbār-i Bahman* and *Akhbār-i Afrāsiyāb*, *MT*, 2.

[144] Hanaway, 92.

[145] Rypka, *op.cit.*, 151; A.A. Duri, *The Rise of History Among the Arabs* (Princeton, 1983), 58-59.

[146] Rypka, *op.cit.*, 58.

[147] M.M. Qazvīnī, 'Muqaddam-i Qadīm-i Shāhnāma', in *Hizār-i Firdawsī* (Tehran, 1322/1943), 123-148; V. Minorsky, 'The Older preface to the Shāhnāma', in *Studi Orientalistici in Onore di Giorgio Levi Della Vida*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1956), 159-179.

[148] Rypka, *op.cit.*, 152; Hanaway, 92.

[149] The name of the authors, like Abu Balkhī, Mas'ūdī Marvazī etc., of the others non-surviving *"Shāhnāmas"* are valuable for the reconstruction, even in part, of the literary context during the period of Firdawsī's literary activity. See Qazvīnī, *op.cit.*, 124.

[150] Nöldeke, 'Beiträge', 11-24.

original or in Arabic/Persian translation. such as *Kārnāmag-i Ardashīr Bābakān*[151] *and the story of Zariadres and Zarīr.*[152]

However, in the Iranian epic cycle the legendary figure of Alexander is transmitted through the Sasanian period to the time of Firdawsī via the so-called *Khwadāynāmag* epic. This work existed in at least twenty versions during the ninth and tenth centuries being the one that contributed most to the creation of Daqīqī's *Shāhnāma*. In the case of *Khwadāynāmag* there was more than one version about the life of Alexander, since in the Iranian literary tradition there were both the stories according to which Alexander was either the son of Nectenabo or Dārā; however, the end of these stories is different from that of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance. In the case of the *Majmu 'l-tawārīkh* there are quotations from both versions. Particularly, it is mentioned that the author has read in a Persian story of Alexander that he was the son of Nectenabo while according to the author of the *Majmu 'l- tawārīkh,* Alexander was the son of Dārā.[153]

Apart from the written sources that the poet used for the compilation of the *Shāhnāma,* much has been said in an ongoing scholarly debate about the case of the oral sources that the poet may have also used in order to compile his poem. Davis has suggested hypothetically that the poet used mostly Iranian legends transmitted orally through storytelling or oral epic poetry.[154] This view is based on stylistic evidence attested in the poem, such as stock epithets, formulae, simple vocabulary and so on. Davis considers these elements to be intimately associated with oral tradition and examples in other literary traditions such as the Iliad.[155] However, his views have been opposed by Khalleghi-Motlagh and Omidsalar who claim that there is no evidence in the poem to suggest that Firdawsī used any oral sources for the compilation of the *Shāhnāma*. On the contrary, it is only the written sources that are cited in the poem.[156] Yamamoto has adopted Davis's theory keeping a more balanced

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[151] Browne, *op.cit.*, 122.

[152] Nöldeke, *Iranian National Epic*, 8-9; Boyce, 'Zariadres and Zarer', *BSOAS,* 17 (1955), 463-464; Browne, *op.cit.*, 121.

[153] *MT*, 31; Nöldeke, 'Beiträge', 52.

[154] D. Davis, 'The Problem of Ferdowsī's Sources', *JAOS,* 116 (1996), 51-56.

[155] He is uses Parry's and Lord's works to facilitate his arguments. M. Parry, *The Making of Homeric Verse: The Collected papers of Milman Parry,* ed. A. Parry (Oxford, 1971), 266-375; A.B. Lord, *The Singer of Tales* (Cambridge Mass., 1960).

[156] Dj. Khaleghī-Motlāgh, 'Dar pīramūn-e manābe-ye Firdawsī', *Irānshināsī,* 10 (1998), 512-540; M. Omidsalar, 'Could al-Tha'ālibi Have Used the Shāhnāma as a Source?', *Der Islam,* 75 (1998), 338-346 and A. Khātībī, 'Yekī nāma būd az gāh-i bāstān', *Nāma-yi Farhangistān: The Quarterly Journal of Iranian Academy of Persian language and Literature* 5 (2002), 54-74.

approach to the issue regarding the poet's written and oral sources.[157] Recently, Omidsalar has strongly disagreed with Yamamoto's theory on the same basis above.[158] In spite of Davis's strong arguments about oral sources of the *Shāhnāma*, it is very hypothetical, due to lack of evidence, to suggest that the poet used mostly oral traditions. By contrast it is 'Abd al-Razzāq's *old preface* that is cited and confirmed by other primary sources as the source for the compilation of the *Shāhnāma*.

The evolutionary process concerning the preservation, and in part transformation, of the pre-Islamic epic literary and oral traditions of the Iranians in the first centuries of the Islamic period is fundamental to the later creation of the Iranian epic by Firdawsī, the *Shāhnāma*. Throughout the ninth and tenth century AD there is an active interest in the epic tradition by several Muslim dynasties that rule Iran (Sāmānids, Būyids and Ghaznavids).[159]

V. The connection between the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*

After almost thirty years of intensive efforts, the completion of the *Shāhnāma* (*The Book of the Kings*) in 1010 AD by Firdawsī (940-1020/5 AD) became a turning point in the history of Iranian literature and marked the creation of the first literary work that demonstrated, in an unprecedented skilful poetical art, the unbroken historical sequence of the Iranian epic royal cycle. It was also the first work that preserved and reflected the Iranian 'national' identity. His effort was patronized by the pro-Persian Sāmānid court and was involved in the long literary process of reviving the Persian literary tradition during the early Islamic period.[160] Although it belongs to a different literary genre, the *Shāhnāma* is a classic example of courtly epic poetry, acting as link between the two different traditions regarding Alexander: firstly

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[157] K. Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics: Storytelling and Poetry* (Leiden/Boston, 2003), xxii.
[158] M. Omidsalar, Review of K. Yamamoto, *The Oral Background of Persian Epics: Storytelling and Poetry* (Leiden/Boston, 2003) in *Iranian Studies*, 38 (2005), 345-348.
[159] Rypka, *op.cit.*, 152-153.
[160] Arberry, *op.cit.*, 18-19; J. Scott Meisami, 'The Past in Service of the Present: Two Views of History on Medieval Persia', *PT*, 14 (1993), 248-252; eadem, 'Why write history in Persian? Historical writing in the Sāmānid period', in *Studies in honour of Clifford Edmund Bosworth*, vol. II, *The Sultan's Turret: Studies in Persian and Turkish Culture*, ed. C. Hillenbrand (Leiden, 2000), 357-358;

it embodies the pre-Islamic Iranian and the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition and secondly it influences the text of the *Iskandarnāma*.

In the approximately 50,000 (48.000-52.000 usually) of *mutaqārib* couplets of Firdawsī's first historical account of *ērānshahr*, from the creation of humanity up to Sasanian times (651 AD),[161] Alexander is incorporated as a prominent figure in the unbroken royal cycle of the legendary and historical Iranian past. Actually, 1931 couplets of the whole poem deal with his reign (*pādishāhī-yi iskandar*).[162] Influenced by the *Khwadāynāmag* where, for the first time, Alexander was included as Iranian king in the epic Iranian cycle, not only did Firdawsī preserve this pre-Islamic tradition but he also advanced it by attributing to Alexander several Iranian and Islamic features.[163] For example, the account of Alexander's pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and the Tomb of Adam reflects the strong influence of the early Islamic tradition.[164] It is important, however, to point out that in Firdawsī's work there is a mixture of pre-Islamic and early Islamic sources regarding the events the Khurāsānī poet narrates. Although Alexander becomes a Ḥajjī in Mecca, he agrees to marry the beautiful daughter of the Indian king Kayd according to Christian law.[165] This contrast reflects both the variety of the literary sources of Firdawsī and the inconsistent treatment of these sources by the poet. However, a comparison of the *Shāhnāma* and the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance could provide adequate answers to questions about the influence of the sources that Firdawsī has consulted as well as the degree to which the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition about Alexander has been transmitted and preserved in the literary tradition of Islamic Iran.

The *Shāhnāma* is a part of the *recension δ* of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance.[166] This recension reflects the tradition and influence of the translation of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* Greek text into (probably Pahlavi), Syriac, Arabic and Ethiopic versions. An objection, of course, could be raised to this classification of the *Shāhnāma*, since the issue of the Pahlavi version still remains open. However, in the

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[161] Rypka, *op.cit.*, 158-159.
[162] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 6-112.
[163] Southgate, 171. One of the sources that Firdawsī had consulted was a reduced version of the epic of kings written before him by Abū Manṣūr Muḥammad b. Aḥmad Daqīqī from Ṭūs. This reduced version of the *Shāhnāma* was inferior in terms of quality to the work of Firdawsī, see Rypka, *op.cit.*, 153-154.
[164] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 624-658.
[165] "نشستند و او را با این بخواست / به رسم مسیحا و پیوند راست", (= They sat and he asked her in marriage in the Christian and right way) ibid., v. 346.
[166] Southgate, 169.

case of the work of Firdawsī, it must be pointed out that the study of his text concerning Alexander's life proves that it is strongly connected with the written tradition of the *recension δ*. As mentioned earlier, the 1931 distiches of the *Shāhnāma* on Alexander's kingship are based to a certain extent on the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition and this can be concluded by studying the striking similarities in the stories depicted in the text of Firdawsī and the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance.[167] A brief analysis of these common points will strengthen the role of the *Shāhnāma* as a link between the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition on Alexander and the post-*Shāhnāma* period (in particular, the influence of Firdawsī's work on the *Iskandarnāma)*. Their common elements are obvious in the narration regarding the life and exploits of Alexander.

In spite of the significant differences between the accounts regarding the life of Alexander,[168] there is quite a number of common points shared by the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition and the text of the *Shāhnāma*; the goose event and Dārā`s ambassadors;[169] Alexander's campaign against the Achaemenids via Egypt;[170] his disguise as a messenger visiting the Achaemenid *Great King* Dārā where he manages to steal the gold drinking cups;[171] the death[172] and the last wishes of Dārā;[173] the Indian campaign of Alexander and the battle against the troops of King Poros who is ultimately defeated in the end by Alexander in a duel;[174] Alexander`s visit to the gymnosophists (=*naked sages*);[175] his long letter to Aristotle;[176] Alexander and the speaking tree;[177] his journey to Central Asia and China;[178] the event with Queen Candace;[179] the killing of a dragon with a poisonous cowhide;[180] Alexander

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[167] Hanaway includes in his PhD thesis a useful preliminary list of some of the common elements between the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance and the `reduced *Shāhnāma*'. However he does not use any references to support his material. See Hanaway, 84-85.

[168] Firdawsī does not mention any details about Alexander`s childhood, his primary expeditions in Greece, Asia Minor and North Africa, the incident with Roxane falling in love with th e portrait of Alexander, the destruction of Persepolis, the poisoning of Alexander and his attempt to commit suicide etc. See the analysis of Hanaway, 85.

[169] *Syriac version*, I, 23; *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 44-45; Hanaway, 84.

[170] *Syriac version*, I.29-34; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 659-687.

[171] *Syriac version*, II.7; *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 55-56.

[172] *Syriac version*, II.12; *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 311-320.

[173] *Syriac version*, II.12; *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 339; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 45.

[174] *Syriac version*, III.1-4; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 560-623. Also see Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 48.

[175] *Syriac version*, III.5-6; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1051-1128; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 49.

[176] *Syriac version*, III.7-8; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1242-1325.

[177] *Syriac version*, III.7; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1494-1551.

[178] *Syriac version*, III.7; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1552-1682; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 50.

[179] *Syriac version*, III.8-14; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 688-1050.

[180] *Syriac version*, III.7; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1201-1205.

and the Amazons;[181] Alexander's letter to his mother;[182] the evil omens pertaining to Alexander`s future:[183] the golden coffin:[184] Alexander`s burial in Alexandria;[185] an overall conclusion about the life of Alexander.[186]

These common threads between the two works suggest an internal structural relation between them based on the literary sequence from the pre-Islamic period to the first centuries of the Islamic era. The influence of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition is obvious in the poem of Firdawsī and suggests that the poet has probably consulted a now lost Arabic translation of the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance among the various sources he used for the creation of his epic poem.[187] Moreover, given the rich material of his work, Firdawsī must have used in an extensive way a number of other accounts closely relating to the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* Syriac version.[188]

The *Shāhnāma* influenced the development of classical Persian literature in the subsequent centuries.[189] The *Iskandarnāma* is one of these works that are connected to the masterpiece of Firdawsī and this connection is of vital importance in terms of Alexander`s life, which is the content of the *Iskandarnāma*.

Firdawsī and the Persian popular tradition about Alexander

The main contribution of the *Shāhnāma* is its vital role as a vehicle of transmitting the Iranian native tradition from mythology to history.[190] The *Shāhnāma* is not a historiographical account in the modern sense. However, it is the poetically skilful accumulation and composition of material drawn from historical accounts and legendary written or oral information coming from several cultural contexts (Iranian,

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[181] *Syriac version*, III. 15-17; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1235-1344.
[182] *Syriac version*, III.17-18; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1763-1801.
[183] *Syriac version*, III.19; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1541-1551.
[184] *Syriac version*, III.22; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1820.
[185] *Syriac version*, III.23; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1840-1841.
[186] *Syriac version*, III.24; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1901-1904.
[187] About the issue of the Arabic version as a source for the *Shāhnāma*, see the introduction in the *Syriac version*, lxii-lxii; Also see *IN*, introduction, 24; For the issue of the sources that Firdawsī had consulted in order to create the *Shāhnāma*, see Brown, *op.cit.*, 121-123; Arberry, *op.cit.*, 51-52; Rypka, *op.cit.*, 153-154;
[188] Browne, *op.cit.*, 118.
[189] W.L. Hanaway, 'The Iranian Epics', in *Heroic Epic and Saga*, ed. F.J. Oinas (Bloomington and London, 1978), 89-90.
[190] Ibid., 150.

Greek, Syriac and so on) and times (pre-Islamic and Islamic).[191] The main tool of the poet is the Persian language (Darī) and he aims to create a monument in poetry and a written source for the history of the Iranians following the official line of history - the sequence of events of the various royal dynasties that ruled Iran in the legendary and historical past until the fall of the Sasanian dynasty (651 AD). However, due to the lack of any historiographical method (except perhaps the linear approach of time), the *Shāhnāma* can hardly be considered nowadays as a scientifically reliable source for the study of the historical past of Iran.

Due to the multiple origins of the material that Firdawsī has consulted there are many historical inaccuracies and anachronisms in his account. These are also a result of the fact that Firdawsī was a Muslim. When he deals with the pre-Islamic Iranian element (neo-Sasanian, secular or religious), he is very careful not to clash with the religious and cultural world-concept of his Muslim contemporaries. In spite of Firdawsī's caution on this issue, the influence of his pre-Islamic sources, his struggle between the concepts of Iranian pre-Islamic glory and the Islamic context of his time can be detected in many parts of his poem. In Alexander's case, one striking example is that he marries, in a Christian fashion, the daughter of Kayd,[192] while in another part of the narration Alexander, as a pious Muslim, carries out his pilgrimage to the Ka'ba and the Tomb of Adam.[193]

The kings more or less reflect the historical past of Iran; but several narrative elements such as letters and speeches of kings and fictional events play a vital role in the narrative. It is mainly an epic poem, with a historical basis, aiming to create a collection of stories of the Iranian past in *mutaqārib* distiches and in a linear manner. The role of this lengthy chain of episodes arranged according to a chronological pattern is primarily didactic and informative.

Alexander plays an important role as a royal Iranian figure in the Iranian epic tradition. Firdawsī's work, as the most representative example of Persian polite literature, has significant influence on the polite and popular written tradition in Iran during the following centuries. One of the texts which were influenced by Firdawsī's account, although not to a great extent, is the *Iskandarnāma*. The genres of the two

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[191] The neo-Sasanian element in Firdawsī's work is distinctive, representing the pre-Islamic Iranian past, and this element plays a crucial role in the effort of the poet to interweave the historical element with the popular sagas and legendary information. See Rypka, *op.cit.*, 159.

[192] See n.194.

[193] *Sh.N.*, 7, Iskandar, v. 41. See chapter V, n. 78.

texts are different; the *Shāhnāma* is the masterpiece of epic poetry and belongs to the so-called 'polite literature' of medieval Iran while the *Iskandarnāma* is one of the most representative examples of the folk romances and reflects the popular literary production in Iran during the Ghaznavid and Saljūq periods.[194]

[194] *IN*, introd., 22-23.

Chapter II. The *Shāhnāma* as a source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*

The influence of Firdawsī's work on the Persian prose romances of pre-Safavid Iran has been insightfully analysed by Hanaway.[1] Nevertheless, apart from a common story between the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*, Hanaway has not examined the *Iskandarnāma* at all. The purpose of this section is to analyze the various forms of influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the *Iskandarnāma* and thus reveal the impact of polite literature in this anonymous prose romance.

Hanaway has implicitly suggested that the influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the *Iskandarnāma* is restricted to the level of stories. In particular he mentions only one example: the storytelling of the story of the Sasanian king Ardashīr and the daughter of the Arsacid king Ardavān, and the subsequent birth of Shāpūr.[2] As shown below, this is not the only story and the only form of the influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the *Iskandarnāma*.

Apart from some elementary details about Firdawsī's account, the introductory chapter has also provided essential material about the relationship between the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition, the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*. This relationship is based on various common themes attested in these three accounts.[3] Thus, acting as a link between the Greek literary tradition and the *Iskandarnāma*, the *Shāhnāma*'s role is of great importance for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*.

The importance of Firdawsī's account is not only implied but it is also clearly stated in the *Iskandarnāma*: the *Shāhnāma* is mentioned several times in the prose narrative as one of the main sources for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*.[4] The quotation of the *Shāhnāma* in the *Iskandarnāma* is attested in the stories about the legendary Iranian kings. For example, when Alexander is in a city near the Green Sea, the ruler of the city narrates for him the story of Kay-Khusraw and the old lady who did not eat milk and butter. This is concerning the importance of justice for kingship. After the end of the story the author intervenes in the narration and reminds the reader

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[1] Hanaway, 196-205.
[2] *IN*, 157-162; Hanaway, 197.
[3] See p.280.
[4] *IN*, 201:14-16 and 207:16.21; by employing past sources in his account, the aim of the author was to show the connection with the past scholarship and moreover to show his stature as serious authors. This happened mostly in historical accounts. See Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 287-288.

that this story is mentioned in the *Shāhnāma* and the *Siyar al-mulūk*.[5] In the next story of the *Iskandarnāma*, Alexander's travel to the City of Siyāvash, the name of the *Shāhnāma* appears twice in order to confirm several aspects of this story. Particularly, after Alexander has the king Turānshāh of Dārābgird beheaded, he adds about his descent that he is from Luhrāsb's line *"as is well known in the Shāhnāma"*.[6] Almost the same expression *"as written (or authored) in the Shāhnāma"* is also used in the same story, when Aristotle narrates to Alexander the story of the king Gushtāsb or the stories of Afrāsiyāb, Siyāvash and Kay-Khusraw.[7] The name of the *Shāhnāma* is attested several times in the narrative and these examples show that the author uses it as a device confirming the reliable character of the information that he provides in the *Iskandarnāma*. It is basically within this spirit that the author uses the name of Firdawsī's account in the narrative.

Hence having proved the mention and role of the *Shāhnāma* as a source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma,* it is necessary to define the aspects of this influence. These aspects are twofold: the first one deals with the image of the Iranian hero and the second one refers to a variety of themes that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* borrowed from Firdawsī's account.

The image of the hero

Regarding the image of 'the Iranian Alexander' it is necessary first to analyze briefly the image of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma* in order to understand the extent of its influence on the formation of his profile in the *Iskandarnāma*. The profile of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma* is predominantly positive but inconsistent in the sense that the poet does not provide a clear image, positive or negative, of the hero. On the one hand, he devotes a whole section of his poem to King Alexander, the Reign of Alexander (*padishāhī-yi Iskandar*),[8] creating for him an entirely positive image; on the other hand there are some points in the rest of his poem that are not in accordance with this positive image of the hero. This dichotomy of the hero's image in Firdawsī's

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[5] "و این حکایت در شهنامه بر بهرام گور می بندند و در سیر ملوک بر نوس و ..." (= *...and this story is mentioned in the Shāhnāma concerning Bahrām Gūr and it is written in the Siyar al-mulūk*). *IN*, 240:21.

[6] "چنان که در شهنامه معروفست...", ibid., 247:5.

[7] "چنان که در شهنامه نوشته است..." (=*as written in the Shāhnāma*), ibid., 249:12 and "چنان... که در شهنامه منقولست..." (=*as narrated in the Shāhnāma*), Ibid., 207:13-16.

[8] *ShN* 6, Iskandar, v. 1-1930.

account is an enigma and is explained by the fact that the poet used his sources, pre-Islamic and Islamic, written and oral, in an inconsistent way. An explanation about the hero`s unstable image could be the fact that in the *Shāhnāma* the heroes` characters are `alive` and their personae evolve in the plot.

Regarding Alexander's positive image, he is a king of ordinary human and imperfect nature, having a pure heart and searching for marvels.[9] His role in the *Shāhnāma* unfolds already in the last years of Dārāb`s reign as a legitimate antagonist and successor of Dārāb to the throne of Iran.[10] Alexander is the son of Dārāb and Nāhīd, King Philip`s daughter. The Kayānid king dispatches his wife back to Greece without knowing that she is pregnant. Thus Alexander is born at the court in Macedon and, when he grows up, he campaigns against his half brother, Dārā, who has, in the meantime, succeeded their dead father to the Iranian throne. Alexander defeats Dārā three times, before becoming the new king of Iran.[11]

The section on Alexander's reign in the *Shāhnāma* starts, when Alexander becomes the king of Iran. He summons the nobles and marries Princess Rushanak. Then he embarks on a series of campaigns and adventures: He campaigns against Kayd and Fūr in Hind,[12] he visits the Ka`ba,[13] Judda and Miṣr,[14] al-Andalus,[15] the Brahmans,[16] the Western Sea,[17] the Land of Habbash[18] and the Narmpāīs,[19] the City of Women,[20] the Land of Darkness, searching for the Water of Life and the Angel Isrāfīl.[21] Then he turns eastwards to build the dam against the Gog and Magog[22] and travels to the End of the World where the Speaking Tree informs him about his forthcoming death.[23] Several details are given about Alexander's relations with

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[9] Cl. Kappler, `Alexandre le Grand en littérature persane classique: est-il devenue un mythe?`, *Luqmān*, 16 (1998), 24.
[10] Ibid., v. 361. About Alexander as legitimate king of Iran, see also Cl. Kappler, `Le Roi `au coeur eveille`. Image du désir et de la mort dans la literature persane classique`, in *Alexandre le Grand figure de l'incomplétude*, ed. Fr. de Polignac (Rome, 2000), 87.
[11] Ibid., v. 389-396.
[12] Ibid., 7, Iskandar, v. 160-623.
[13] Ibid., v. 624-658.
[14] Ibid., v. 659-687.
[15] Ibid., v. 688-1050.
[16] Ibid., v. 1051-1129.
[17] Ibid., v. 1130-1158.
[18] Ibid., v. 1159-1176.
[19] Ibid., v. 1176-1234.
[20] Ibid., v. 1235-1344.
[21] Ibid., v. 1345-1420.
[22] Ibid., v. 1421-1475.
[23] Ibid., v. 1476-1551.

Chīn,[24] his trips to Sīnd and Yemen,[25] to Babylon,[26] Aristotle's correspondence with him[27] and lastly his death and funeral.[28]

In the above adventures Alexander appears as a legitimate, primarily semi-Iranian, king who is strongly characterised by a deep concept of justice and a philosophical spirit of kingship. This positive model of Alexander was adopted by the poet mainly under the influence of the prevalent Islamic tradition in his lifetime. This tradition promoted the fused Perso-Islamic model of pre-Islamic royal Iranian figures in tenth-century eastern Iran, especially at the Sāmānid court, where Firdawsī also lived and worked, compiling the *Shāhnāma*. This fused model merged the cultural and historical gap between the pre-Islamic and Islamic concept of the past amongst the Iranians.[29] Thus the influence of Islamic tradition plays a vital role in the formation of the fused image of Alexander (semi-Iranian Muslim king) in the *Shāhnāma*. But this positive model is not the only one for Alexander in the poem.

At the end of the section on Alexander's reign, he writes a letter to Aristotle informing him about his plan to eliminate the Kayānid nobility so as to prevent them from waging a war against Rūm in the future.[30] However, Aristotle wisely admonishes him not to do so.[31] How is it possible for a legitimate semi-Iranian king to plan to kill his relatives? This passage is of particular importance since it is contrary to the general image of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma*. Two other examples are attested in the *Shāhnāma* and confirm the co-existence of another trend about the character of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma*. During the reign of the Ashkānīān (Parthians) Alexander, along with Ḍaḥḥāk and Afrāsiyāb, is regarded by Ardashīr I, the Sasanian king, as one of the three evil rulers in Iranian history.[32] Also in Khusraw Parvīz's reign Alexander is mentioned as the reason for the rivalry between Iran and Rūm.[33] These examples reflect the influence of the Zoroastrian tradition on the negative profile of Alexander in the *Shāhnāma*.[34]

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[24] Ibid., v. 1552-1645.
[25] Ibid., v. 1646-1682.
[26] Ibid., v. 1683-1716.
[27] Ibid., v. 1717-1762.
[28] Ibid., v. 1763-1908.
[29] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 25.
[30] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1721-1725; trans. 178-179.
[31] Ibid., v. 1725-1726; trans. 179.
[32] Ibid., v. 660-665 and 844-845; trans. 240.
[33] Ibid., 9, Khusraw Parvīz, v. 3341-3343.
[34] See p.41.

Hence, the twofold aspect of Alexander's character in the Firdawsī' account could be the result of the inconsistent methodology of Firdawsī about the use of his sources. The fact that he uses pre-Islamic and Islamic sources indiscriminately is obvious in Alexander's case.[35] However, this contrast between pre-Islamic and Islamic tradition is not the case about Alexander's profile in the *Iskandarnāma*. Here pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions about him are fused in harmony. The influence of the *Shāhnāma*, however, remains overwhelming.

In the *Iskandarnāma* the fused image of Alexander consists of two features: the Muslim and the ethnic Iranian. Given that the Muslim aspect of the hero is analyzed in another chapter,[36] this discussion will emphasize the Iranian aspect of Alexander's character in the *Iskandarnāma* as a manifestation of the *Shāhnāma*'s influence.

This semi-Iranian aspect of Alexander is based on the above well-known Persian version of his origin, according to which he is the son of the Kayānid king Dārāb and Nāhīd, the daughter of the Greek king Philip of Macedon.[37] The *Shāhnāma*'s version is repeated in the *Iskandarnāma* in its basic details: the animosity between Dārāb and Philip and their armistice,[38] Dārāb and Nāhīd's marriage and the motif of her bad odour and Dārā's displeasure, [39] Nāhīd's pregnancy,[40] Alexander's birth, physical description and the good omens concerning the child's future (he will conquer the world).[41] Another striking similarity between the two accounts is Alexander's Divine Effulgence which enables him to rule Iran legitimately.[42]

There are two major differences between the two accounts about Alexander's story: technically the prose account is shorter (three pages of the edited text)[43], whilst Firdawsī is more analytical by devoting 77 distiches to this issue.[44] This difference is plausible given that the *Shāhnāma* is a stylistically elaborated poem and the poet is

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[35] Y. Yamanaka, 'Ambiguïté de l'image d'Alexandre chez Firdawsī: les traces des traditions sassanides dans *le Livre des Rois*', in L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*, 341-342.
[36] See p.162.
[37] Safavī, *Iskandar*, 38.
[38] *IN*, 3:7-13; *ShN* 6, Dārāb, v. 72-93.
[39] According to both accounts the bad odour episode took place one month after their marriage, ibid., 4:3-12–*ShN*, 6, Dārāb, v. 94-105.
[40] *IN*, 4:13–*ShN*, 6, Dārāb, v. 106.
[41] *IN*, 4:18-5:2–*ShN*, 6, Dārāb, v. 110-134.
[42] See p.132.
[43] *IN*, 3-5.
[44] *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 72-134.

very keen on descriptions and details. On the contrary, the narration in the *Iskandarnāma* is very simple in style.

The second and major difference between the two accounts is the role of the Persianized Alexander. In the *Shāhnāma* the 'ethnic' element is predominant. Alexander is a semi-Iranian king who links the Kayānids with the next Iranian kings. His semi-Iranian identity is present in every verse of the poem. This implicitly reflects the poet's intention to produce a more Persian narrative or it simply results from a lack of systematic use of his sources, or both. By contrast, in the *Iskandarnāma* his semi-Iranian identity is clearly given in the very first lines but then it disappears from the rest body of the narration. This is due to the fact that the author promotes the Muslim profile of the hero. By citing Alexander's origin at the beginning of the narrative, the author manages to establish and preserve the 'ethnic' identity of the hero in the background of the narration. The 'ethnic' element is constantly implied but remains in the shadow of Alexander's predominant religious aspect.

Moreover, the fused model of Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma* is also an influence of the *Shāhnāma*. However, the difference in this case is that the Muslim aspect prevails over that of the pre-Islamic 'ethnic' (semi-Iranian). In the *Shāhnāma* both aspects coexist but the Muslim element is much more restricted, perhaps an example of the poet's intention to highlight the Iranian element in the narrative.[45] In the *Iskandarnāma* the importance of Alexander's religious image is demonstrated by his association with the Quranic *dhu'l-qarnayn* (*the double-horned one*) already in the second line of the narrative.[46]

Furthermore, Alexander in the *Shāhnāma* does not appear to be essentially integrated into the Iranian cycle of kings. His reign is quite distinct from the reign of kings. Stories of his reign do not include material from reigns of previous Iranian kings.[47] In the *Iskandarnāma*, however, Alexander's time is harmoniously interwoven with the reign of legendary Iranian kings, such as Siyāvash and Kay-Khusraw. This is technically achieved through references to the reign of these kings. Hence, the *Iskandarnāma* reflects the development of a different model of Alexander who has now fully been integrated in the Iranian cycle of kings; these have been similarly transformed into Perso-Muslim kings.

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[45] Meisami, 'The past in service of the present', 259.
[46] *IN*, 3:2.
[47] C.-H. de. Fouchécour, 'Alexandre le macédonien iranisé. L'exemple du récit par Nézāmi (XIIe siècle) de la visite d'Alexandre à la grotte de Key Khosrow', in L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*, 228.

Hence, it can be suggested that the story of Alexander's origin in the *Iskandarnāma* has been derived from the *Shāhnāma*. This is due to various reasons: first, the version of the Persianized Alexander in Persian literature is first attested in Firdawsī's account; second, the *Shāhnāma* is attested as one of the sources for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*; third, the period of their compilation (early eleventh century) and the common geographical environment of the compilation of the two accounts (eastern Iran) and last, the striking similarities between both accounts about Alexander's origin.

Themes

Apart from the theme of Alexander's semi-Iranian origin, another influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the *Iskandarnāma* is the repertoire of stories which form the narrative in the *Iskandarnāma*. As shown below, this influence is overwhelming and it is traced both in the arrangement of stories as well as their content.

Concerning the first aspect, the division and arrangement of stories, it is striking that in both narratives there is a geographical layout of stories, a result of the influence of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition on the *Shāhnāma*. This division is based mainly on a single division: the western and eastern travels of Alexander. Travelling, as the essence of the legendary life of Alexander, results from his historical *vita*. However, the western and eastern divisions must be interpreted as an influence of the *dhu 'l-qarnayn* (the *double-horned one*) Muslim tradition.[48]

From the two books of the *Iskandarnāma*, the influence of the *Shāhnāma* is traced mainly in the first one. Here, almost all stories have been taken from Firdawsī's account and they are presented in a more comprehensive way in order to suit the needs of prose narration. In the second book, the author of the *Iskandarnāma* uses less material from the *Shāhnāma* and more from the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition and an unknown legendary cycle concerning the Turks in Central Asia.

Another comment about the twofold arrangement of stories in both accounts is that the first book in the *Shāhnāma* is more extensive, covering almost two thirds of the section about Alexander's reign.[49] By contrast in the *Iskandarnāma* the first book

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[48] See p.165.

[49] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1-1421 out of total 1931 verses.

covers only one fourth of the narrative, consisting only of 220 out of the 750 printed pages.[50] Although neither author is well informed on geographical issues, the different geographical focus between the two accounts probably reflects the particular aim of the author of the *Iskandarnāma*: whilst for Firdawsī geography is not his main interest, the author of the *Iskandarnāma* pays more attention to geography and the East because he associates Alexander's legendary life with various contemporary events in the early eleventh century.[51]

The first book (the western conquests)

Concerning the influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the first book of the *Iskandarnāma*, the author of the latter has used Firdawsī's geographical layout as a model for his narrative. In the first chapter (Alexander's birth), there are various details such as the wars between Faylaqūs, the king of Rūm, and Dārāb, the king of Iran, their armistice, Dārāb and Nāhīd's marriage, the motif of bad odour and Alexander's birth. The material in this episode of the *Iskandarnāma* comes from *Dārāb's Reign* in the *Shāhnāma*.[52] Moreover, the latest part of the first episode covers events (Faylaqūs' death, Alexander's emergence to the throne in Greece and his refusal to pay tribute to his half brother Dārā)[53] which are narrated more extensively in the *Shāhnāma* (*Reign of Dārā*).[54] The second chapter (King Alexander the *dhu'l-qarnayn*'s expedition to Iran to fight Dārāb the son of Dārāb) can be thematically identified with Firdawsī's *Reign of Dārā* (Dārā's defeat and death, and Alexander as king of Iran)[55] and the initial part of the *Alexander's Reign*.[56]

From the remaining fifteen stories of the first book of the *Iskandarnāma*, eight are fully related to the *Shāhnāma* repertoire: Alexander and Fūr in India,[57] Alexander and King Kayd of Ceylon,[58] Alexander and the Davālpāyan,[59] Alexander in Mecca and the Ka'ba,[60] in Yemen, in Egypt,[61] in al-Andalus[62] and the Land of Darkness.[63]

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[50] *IN*, 1-220.
[51] See p.91.
[52] *ShN*, 6, Dārāb, v. 94-105
[53] *IN*, 5:15-6:7.
[54] *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 25-69.
[55] *IN*, 7-11:7; *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 148-401.
[56] *IN*, 11:8-12; *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 402-453.
[57] *IN*, 16-23; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 459-623.
[58] *IN*, 58-85; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 103-458.
[59] *IN*, 96-100; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1177-1234.
[60] *IN*, 101-106; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 624-658.

Although their number seems to form only half of the stories of the first book in the *Iskandarnāma*, they cover the vast majority of the first book in terms of pages. What is striking about these *Shāhnāma* stories is that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* uses them as a basis on which he builds the development of the narrative. He does not copy his source uncritically word by word. By contrast, he uses Firdawsī's account creatively as a treasury of information.

In spite of the simple style of the language of the *Iskandarnāma*, the author's techniques are sophisticated. He modifies his material in each story according to the needs of the prose narration. His techniques vary. Sometimes, he personally intervenes in the unfolding of the narrative. For example, in the chapter on Queen Qaydhāfa in al-Andalus and the possibility that she might have spent the night with Alexander, the author does not hesitate to add his opinion about God's omniscience.[64]

Another technique is to omit details which he thinks are not necessary. For example, in the case of the Dārāb and Faylaqūs' war, the author omits all details that are found in the *Shāhnāma* and simply adds that the Iranian king *'had subjugated Rūm'*.[65] In other cases, he blends material from other sources, such as the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, with stories which are drawn from the *Shāhnāma*. Again at the end of Alexander's visit to al-Andalus and just before the commencement of the chapter on Alexander in the Land of Darkness, the author interpolates the story of a legendary city which the hero visits. The citizens of the city were previously idolaters but they were converted to Islam by the prophet Elias and his student Yisa'. After the end of this secondary story the author intervenes in the narration, adding that this story is described in full detail in the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. However, he has included it briefly in the *Iskandarnāma*, because his aim is to narrate Alexander's life and avoid any unnecessary excursus.[66]

Another aspect of the author's techniques is that of using the *Shāhnāma* material in a more composite way. There are cases where he uses several *Shāhnāma* stories as an addition to a chapter of the *Iskandarnāma*. These stories, however, are

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[61] *IN*, 132-191; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 659-687.
[62] *IN*, 192-201; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 688-1050.
[63] *IN*, 206-212; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1345-1420.
[64] *IN*, 195:14.
[65] *ShN*, 6, Dārāb, v. 42-69; "**...و روم را بقحر در حکم مملکت خودرا آورده بود...**", *IN*, 3:3-4.
[66] " **و این قصه در قصص الانبیا بشرح نوشته و از این کتاب مقصودما داستان اسکندرست نه قصص انبیا و حکایتهای دیگر**" (*"... and this story is reportedly written in the book of the Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā' and our purpose is the story of Alexander not the Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā' or other stories)*, *IN*, 205:18-20.

not directly relevant to the main theme of the *Iskandarnāma* chapter. For example, in the case of Alexander's travels to the Land of Darkness, not only does he employ Firdawsī's material extensively in this story but he also adds some incidents coming from other cycles, such as those of Kay-Khusraw and Luhrāsb's reigns.[67]

Concerning the first book in each account, their similarities are obviously striking. These are strengthened by another common detail. In both accounts the transition from the first book to the second takes place basically after the completion of the chapter on Alexander's visit to the Land of Darkness. The only difference is that in the *Iskandarnāma* the author uses an additional story (the miracle with the Scorpion and the Youth) intervening between the Land of Darkness and the eastern campaign (second book). This must be seen as an excursus by the author probably in his aim to glorify his patron Sulṭān Maḥmūd who is compared with Alexander in this chapter.[68]

The second book (the eastern conquests)

In contrast to the *Shāhnāma,* where the second book deals with Alexander's travels in a few countries and his correspondence with Aristotle, the second book in the *Iskandarnāma* forms the backbone of the narrative and it is where the main bulk of action unfolds. The author must have received his material from another unknown eastern Iranian legendary cycle of stories.

Alexander's travels to Turkistān and Central Asia and his aim, along with spreading Islam, is eschatological, to confront the Gog and Magog, build the dam and reach the End of the Earth. The influence of the *Shāhnāma* in the second book of the *Iskandarnāma* is not so strong but remains influential. This influence takes three forms: the existence of a second book, the use of stories from Firdawsī's account and the association of Turkistān with the eternal struggle between the Iranians and the Turks.

About the first factor, the division of the *Iskandarnāma* into two books, this is probably an influence of the *Shāhnāma*. The fact that Alexander's turning to the East takes place after his failure to find the Water of Life is a striking similarity in both

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[67] Ibid., 207:14-16 (Siyāvash and Afrāsiyāb); 207:19-20 (Kay Khusraw and Afrāsiyāb); 208:1-3 (Kay Khusraw and Luhrāsb).
[68] Ibid., 218:5-9.

accounts, thus strengthening the argument that this twofold geographical division of the *Iskandarnāma* is an influence of the *Shāhnāma*.[69]

The stories that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* drew from the *Shāhnāma* in his second book are far less than those that he employed in the first book. In fact there are only three. The first episode in the narrative is Alexander's journey to China.[70] In the *Shāhnāma* the king is named Faghfūr, whilst in the *Iskandarnāma* he is called simply 'Khāqān of China', and not 'Emperor' as Southgate translates.[71] The Turkic regal title is an implication that Alexander visited Chinese Turkistān. The motif of Alexander's meeting with the Chinese Khāqān disguised as messenger is attested in both accounts.[72] Alexander's travel to China is far lengthier than that of the *Shāhnāma*, since it consists of four chapters. This is a proof that the author used more sources, enriching the main story from the *Shāhnāma* with secondary stories from other sources. As usual, he draws material about Solomon and various other prophets from the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition.[73]

Another common story in the *Iskandarnāma* is that of Alexander's visit to Fairyland.[74] The same story in the first book of the *Shāhnāma* is termed as Alexander's visit to the City of Women (Ḥarām), an altered form of the Amazons' legend coming from the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance.[75] In the *Iskandarnāma* the story is further developed and modified. While in the *Shāhnāma*, there is a forbidden city of women for Alexander, in the *Iskandarnāma* there is not such a city but a whole kingdom of female fairies. That it is about the same legend, there is no doubt. In fact, Firdawsī also mentions fairies as comrades of the Queen. So there are two cases: either the author in the *Iskandarnāma* developed this story based mainly on his own imagination or he employed a legend similar to Firdawsī's but further enriched it. The

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[69] "شاه را حکیم را گفت از مغرب باز پرداختیم و آن عجایبها نوشته آمد. اکنون کتاب دیگر آغاز کن تا احوال و عجایبها مشرق بر آن ثبت کنی تا بعد از ما بخوانند و مارا یاد کنند و نام بدان زنده ماند." [= the king said to the Sage: we travelled all the West and these miracles have been written down. Now start another book and write down all stories and miracles of the East so as (the future generations) will read it and will remember us and our name will remain alive], *IN*, 220:14-16;
"سوی باختر شد چو خاور بدید ز گیتی همی رای رفتن گزید", (=*He turned to the West, once he saw the East / he chose to travel all over the world*) *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1421.

[70] *IN*, 250-256; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1552-1682.

[71] Southgate, 67.

[72] *IN*, 286:3; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1557.

[73] *IN*, 251:11.

[74] Ibid., 354-385.

[75] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1235-1344.

great difference between the two accounts is that Alexander fights against the female fairies whereas in the *Shāhnāma* he visits the city of women peacefully.

The third story which has been taken from the *Shāhnāma* is Alexander's fight against the Blacks. These are mentioned as *'Ḥabbash (lit. those who scrape their skin)'* by Firdawsī, whilst in the *Iskandarnāma* they are called Zangīs.[76] Moreover, the Zangīs in the *Iskandarnāma* are located in Central Asia, while in the *Shāhnāma* they are somewhere in the West, and mainly in Africa. This relocation results from two factors: the lack of knowledge about geography on the author's part and the use of the Zangīs as a symbolic representation of pagan Turks.

It is the fight against the infidels of Turkistān that dominates the *Iskandarnāma* (third factor). The influence of the *Shāhnāma* in this process is considerable, although peripheral to the main action. The core of the narration is probably dictated by historical developments, contemporary to the compilation of the narrative.[77] Alexander's struggle against Shāhmalik, the king of Turkistān, and his family monopolizes the interest in the second book. In a series of numerous episodes, the Turks are allied to the Zangīs against Alexander. The fact that the narrative takes place in Central Asia gives the author the opportunity to borrow from the *Shāhnāma* the well-known theme of the eternal battle between Iran and Tūrān. Thus this well-known motif is skilfully associated with the symbolic representation of contemporary events.

Alexander is identified as the legitimate king of Iran and during his campaign in Central Asia several themes of the *Shāhnāma*, and the legendary Iranian cycle of kings, appear. For example, the chapter titled *'Alexander's arrival at the Siyāvashgard and what happened between him and the king of that land'* is inspired by a related incident in the *Shāhnāma.*[78] In the rest of the narrative there are some hints of the *Shāhnāma* influence, such as the mention of the Iranian kings Luhrāsb and Kay Khusraw, as well as Iran's enemies Ḍaḥḥāk, Afrāsiyāb.[79]

One can also trace Firdawsī's influence on the *Iskandarnāma* by viewing its second book in retrospect: the negative image of the Turks, as the *Other,* the eternal enemies of the Iranians, must be seen as an influence of Firdawsī's account. This struggle, however, is creatively fused with the Muslim element and the fact that the

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[76] *IN*, 420; *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1159-1176.
[77] See p.81.
[78] ,, *رفتن شاه اسکندر به سیاوشگرد و احوال او با شها آنجا*", *IN*, 242.
[79] *IN*, 380:7-9; 392:21.

Turks are not only enemies of the Iranians in ethnic terms but they are also their foes in a religious manner, since they are infidels, whilst the Iranians are Muslims.

There has been an attempt to prove the importance of the *Shāhnāma* as a source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*. This is expressed mainly through two aspects: Alexander's image as the semi-Iranian legitimate king of Iran and the repertoire that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* uses. In the first case, Alexander's semi-Iranian image is directly taken from Firdawsī. With regard to the *Shāhnāma* repertoire, this is demonstrated both by the division of the *Iskandarnāma* into two books (the eastern and western conquests) and the stories that each book contains. Firdawsī's influence is paramount in the first book, while in the second the *Shāhnāma* has a peripheral role about the type of stories. Nevertheless, the dominating idea of the second book of the *Iskandarnāma*, the Irano-Turkic struggle in Turkistān, is inspired by the *Shāhnāma*.

It is interesting to see that some stories which appear in the first book (the western conquests) in the *Shāhnāma* appear in the second book (the eastern conquests) in the *Iskandarnāma* (for example the City of Women in the first book of the *Shāhnāma* is attested as Fairyland in the second book of the *Iskandarnāma*). By contrast, the chapter on Alexander's travel to Yemen appears in the second book of the *Shāhnāma* whilst it is attested in the first book of the *Iskandarnāma*). This must be seen as a reflection of the technique that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* used in the selection of stories and the compilation of the narrative.

Firdawsī's influence in the *Iskandarnāma* is reflected in the number of quotations of the '*Shāhnāma*' in the *Iskandarnāma*. Firdawsī's account is mentioned nine times in the whole narrative as a source for its compilation,[80] whilst the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* is mentioned five times[81] and the *Siyar al-mulūk* once.[82] It is noteworthy that from the nine occasions that the *Shāhnāma* or Firdawsī are cited in the narrative, seven take place in the first book and two in the second book, both being in the Story of Alexander's visit to Shiyāvashgard.[83]

A last point could be mentioned about the original extent of the narrative. The manuscript of the *Iskandarnāma* is defective and the narrative breaks off suddenly

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[80] Ibid., 129:17; 162:16; 201:14,16; 207:16; 208:1; 247:5; 249:12.
[81] Ibid., 205:18; 251:11; 253:18; 311:12; 352:14.
[82] Ibid., 240:21.
[83] Ibid., 247:5; 249:12.

when Alexander defeats a warlike queen of Central Asia, Yaqūtmalik.[84] If someone compares the similarity of contents between the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*, then it is possible to hypothesise about what is missing. In regard to the beginning of the narrative, the missing pages cannot be more than two, or more probably one.[85] The lost pages could contain the introductory lines which usually involved an invocation to God and the name of the author, as happens in the case of the *Dārābnāma*.[86]

Regarding the lost pages at the end of the narrative, things are more complicated. In spite of the multiple stories and themes and the various twists and turns of the plot, there is a particular eschatological goal that Alexander is pursuing: After his failure to find the Water of Life, he heads eastwards to visit the Place of the Rising Sun or the extreme East. This is the place where the Gog and Magog dwell and Alexander aims to defeat them and bring salvation to mankind, as implied in the narrative.[87] Yet, this goal seems too distant because of the various adventures intervening en route through Central Asia. The Turks implicitly appear as the main obstacle preventing Alexander from reaching the Place of the Rising Sun. Whether he reached this place or not remains unknown because of the defective status of the manuscript. Nevertheless, given that all stories (*Shāhnāma*, *Dārābnāma*, Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma* and so on) about Alexander end with his death, it can be suggested that the *Iskandarnāma* prose romance also ended in a similar fashion after reaching the Place of the Rising Sun and enclosing the Gog and Magog. The precise number of remaining pages cannot be defined because it is unknown how many stories existed between the story of Yaqūtmalik and Alexander's death. Yet the overall extent of the current narrative suggests that Alexander was still away from the Land where the sun rises. Various main or secondary stories could have existed delaying the end of the hero and strengthening the interest of the audience for more adventures.

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[84] *IN*, 750-770.
[85] Southgate, 3.
[86] *DN*, 3:1-3.
[87] *IN*, 506:21; see p.164.

Chapter III. Dating the narrative

What is interesting in regard to the Persian *Iskandarnāma* is that it has not yet been dated with a considerable degree of certainty and precision. This is due to the defective condition of the Tehran manuscript which has not preserved a considerable number of its last pages, and hence its colophon, which could provide valuable information about the author. The date and the place of the manuscript's compilation are also missing. Moreover, in the text there is no reference to the name of the author, compiler, or date, or even place where the narrative was compiled. It is suggested in this analysis for the first time that the narrative was initially produced by a certain author during Sulṭān Maḥmūd's reign. It was then recompiled after Maḥmūd's death by one of his Ghaznavid successors and at least a third stage of compilation took place in the late eleventh century. The place of the first, and probably second, stages is suggested to have been the Ghaznavid Empire while there is no evidence regarding the location of the third stage. Moreover, the analysis which follows suggests that the narrative must not be viewed as a 'popular' account but as a rare example of court literature aiming to entertain all types of social classes.

The *Iskandarnāma* belongs to the genre of medieval Persian prose romances. In fact, it is the oldest surviving version of the *Alexander romance* in Persian prose.[1] The medieval written form of the romance can be found in the manuscript held in the private collection of Sa'īd Nafīsī in Tehran.[2] The one and only edition of the text was published by Īraj Afshār in Tehran (1343/1964)[3] and a printed English translation of a small part of the text was produced by Minoo S. Southgate in New York thirteen years later (1977).[4]

Throughout the twentieth century well-known authorities in classical Persian literature suggested various theories about the date that the narrative was compiled. These analyses are based on two factors: first, the linguistic evidence and some historical names

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[1] Hanaway, 'Eskandar-Nāmah', 611.
[2] *IN*, introd., 22; Southgate, 2-3.
[3] *IN*, introd., 22.
[4] Southgate translated in a selective way approximately 165 pages out of the 770 pages of the preserved text. The criteria for her selection were the avoidance of translating repetitive parts of the narrative and stories that are only remotely connected with Alexander's legend. Southgate, 5.

mentioned in the *Iskandarnāma,* and second, the technical details of the manuscript, such as paper quality, ink and the like. Before analyzing the new evidence and theory that the current thesis suggests about the date and place of the narrative, it is important to present briefly some technical details of the manuscript and the theories that have been so far claimed regarding the age of the *Iskandarnāma.*

Concerning the technical details of the Tehran manuscript, it is defective primarily at the beginning and end of the text. The current manuscript consists of 264 leaves but there were more in its original form. Judging from the development of the narrative, there are a considerable number of leaves which are not included in the current state of the manuscript. One or two leaves are missing from the beginning and the bottom of the leaf 264b is the last one in its current state. The narrative is interrupted suddenly due to the loss of the subsequent leaves of the manuscript. However, the exact number of leaves missing cannot be calculated. Every leaf measures 30x22 cm and is made from thick and yellowish *"Baghdādī"* paper.[5] The scripture is "naskh" with open and large characters. Every leaf has ten lines and the titles are written in red and black ink. The manuscript has a cover. During the compilation of the manuscript some points on the surface of some of the leaves have been corrupted, water was shed accidentally on some of the first leaves while some other leaves were torn during the process of rewriting the text.[6] There are many *lacunae* in several parts of the text. The author is a systematic and experienced calligrapher; when one word is cut by the lack of space, the calligrapher writes the rest of the word in the space over the main part of the word.

Regarding the theories about the time of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma,* authorities such as Bahār, Ṣafā and Maḥjūb have suggested that the linguistic evidence of the text denotes that it was written some time in the eleventh, twelfth or even early thirteenth centuries.[7] According to Bahār, several linguistic features in the narrative could be dated back to the eleventh century and some others to the twelfth century. Bahār uses specific examples of words and phrases with an archaic form or meaning, thus denoting

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[5] Ibid., 3.

[6] *IN,* introduction, 33-34; it must be noted that the author of this dissertation could not have access to the original manuscript and he consulted it only through a photographic reproduction found at Sa'īd Nafīsī's library.

[7] M.T. Bahār, *Sabkshināsī,* 3 vols. (Tehran, 1321/1942), 2:133 and Dh. Ṣafā, *Ḥamāsa' sarā'i-i dar Irān,* (Tehran, 1333/1954), 90.

the early date of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*. For example, the late term *dar* (=in) and its early form *andar* are met both in the *Iskandarnāma*, a token of the fusion that took place during the compilation of the text. Another similar example is that of the early form *bibūd* of the verb *būd* (=was).[8] The expression *dar pīsh* or *dar nazdīk* becomes gradually *pīsh*[9] and *yak* becomes *yakī*. The use of the early form *bi* + *mī* + *verb (bimīdānist)*, instead of *mīdānist*, for the past continuous tense is also used as an argument for the early date of the *Iskandarnāma* (eleventh or twelfth century).[10] The existence of terms attested in Bal'amī and Rūdakī's accounts could implicitly suggest a link between the narrative and the Sāmānid court.[11] Some rare terms of Pahlavi origin also show that the initial core of the *Iskandarnāma* may go back to the Sāmānid period.[12]

Moreover, Bahār uses linguistic examples of later times (from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries) in order to show the evolutionary compilation of the narrative after the eleventh and twelfth centuries: *chunīn, īnjā, mutal'a kardan, jang kardan dar, tazallum, pīsh*.[13] In the case of *dilkhush dādan*,[14] he notices that this is a later expression. Bahār also uses terms which are met in other accounts and authors, such as *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, and Sanā'ī.[15] Another feature suggesting the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* in several stages is the existence of secondary stories.[16] These arguments denote that the narrative underwent several compilations and changes before reaching its present form.

Apart from the linguistic features, in order to date the text to the middle or the end of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, Bahār lists the names of several key personalities and accounts mentioned in the narrative, such as the *Shāhnāma-yi Firdawsī Ṭūsī* (=The *Book of Kings* by Firdawsī from Ṭūs), *'Unṣūrī, Sulṭān Maḥmūd*[17] and especially the name of the scribe *'Abd 'l-kāfī b. Abi 'l-Barakāt*.[18] Bahār's theory apparently established a

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[8] *IN*, 1:2-4. Also see G. Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans (IXe-Xe siècles): fragments rassemblés, édités et traduits* (Téhéran, 1964), 44,46.
[9] Bahār, *op.cit.*, 2:134.
[10] Ibid, 2:135.
[11] Ibid, 2:131.
[12] Ibid, 2:147.
[13] Ibid, 2:148.
[14] Ibid, 2:135.
[15] Ibid, 2:136.
[16] Ibid, 2:148-151.
[17] Ibid, 2:132.
[18] Ibid, 2:128-129; *IN*, 497:1-2.

range of four centuries (eleventh-fifteenth centuries), emphasizing the eleventh century for the compilation of the narrative.

Īraj Afshār's contribution to the issue of dating the *Iskandarnāma* took place in his edition of the Tehran manuscript in 1963. In his introduction, like Bahār, he also analyses the linguistic data. He mainly considers the use of both plural forms, Persian and Arabic, in an Arabic word,[19] as an important indication of the archaic character of the text. Afshār also pays attention to the vocabulary and the grammar of the text. For example, he mentions the cases of *bar* (over) used as *dar (in, into)*, *be* (*to*) used as *bā (with)* or *barāyi (for ...)* and others.[20] Afshār disagrees with the opinion that the presence of archaic forms of New Persian necessarily means that the text is of early date. He strongly believes that the simultaneous existence of archaic and modern forms of the same term (verb, phrase and others) in the text denotes the long process of compilation that the *Iskandarnāma* went through along with the adoption of old and new forms of expression. This is proved by the text itself. In the narrative the author clearly deals with incoherence in the details of a story.[21]

Afshār's opinion regarding the time of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* is based on two arguments: the technical details of the manuscript and several historical details detected in the narrative. With regard to the first factor (dealing with the type of script and the paper quality of the manuscript) Afshār dates it to no later than the fourteenth century.[22] As for the second factor, he insightfully refers to the names of Sulṭān Maḥmūd (d. 1030 AD) and ʿAbū Saʿīd Khargūshī (d. 1016 AD) who are mentioned in the narrative.[23] Afshār suggests for the first time that several stories attested in the *Iskandarnāma* reflect historical events related to the time of the author of the narrative.[24] Afshār claims this is based on the extensive role of the Turks as Alexander's adversaries, especially in Turkistān. Afshār thinks that these Turks can be identified with the dynasty (*khuna-yi*) of the Khāqāniyya, or Qarakhānids, who ruled Turkistān in the

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[19] *IN*, introd., 30
[20] Ibid., 33.
[21] *IN*, 496:6.
[22] *IN*, introd., 22-23.
[23] Afshār dates the narrative after Maḥmūd's life time because of the expression *"rahmatullāh (ʿalaihi), رحمه الله (علیه) (May God have mercy upon him)"*. See ibid., 23. Also Ṣafā, *op.cit.*, 2:132.
[24] *IN*, introd., 23.

period 320-560 AH.[25] Hence, based on the linguistic evidence, the technical details and the historical information of the manuscript, Afshār dates the text sometime between 1030 AD (death of Sulṭān Maḥmūd) and the eighth century AH/fourteenth century AD (the style of the script and the type of paper).[26] Additionally, another scholar, M. J. Maḥjūb, claimed that the manuscript should be dated to the late twelfth and early thirteenth century based on similar examples of style, grammar and syntax.[27]

In the years following these initial accounts only a few works were produced dealing directly or indirectly with the *Iskandarnāma*. The common element in these works is that the authors simply reproduced the previous theories about dating the *Iskandarnāma* .[28] The reason for this lack of new insights on this issue in contemporary scholarship springs from the nature of the narrative itself; its legendary character and inclusion of heterogeneous material are factors that could prevent a researcher from reaching solid conclusions.

As for the place of the *Iskandarnāma* compilation(s) (initial or later ones) there have been no theories or even assumptions so far. Indeed, this issue is much more difficult to define due to a complete lack of precise information.

With regard to the above theories concerning the time of the narrative, it is necessary to mention that they all have correct and insightful arguments which complement each other. The theory below regarding the dating of the *Iskandarnāma* includes several aspects of the above theories; in particular, Afshār`s theory contains several useful tips.

Contributing to the discussion about the age of the narrative, this analysis approaches the same text by providing new insights. Hanaway`s view that the narrative

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[25] Ibid., 23; the correct dates of the Qarakhānid period are 382-609/992-1212, see C.E. Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties, A Chronological and Genealogical Manual* (Edinburgh, 2004), 181-184.
[26] *IN*, introd.,, 22-23.
[27] M.J. Maḥjūb, 'Iskandarnāma', *Sukhān*, 17 (1346/1967), 455.
[28] Southgate, 2-3; Hanaway, 9; Rubanovich, 'Reconstruction', 215; idem, Review of 'Abū Ṭāhir Ṭarsūsī, *Dārābnāma, or the Book of Dārāb*. Translated and Annotated by N.B. Kondyreva (Moscow, 2000)' in *JSAI*, 27 (2002), 603.

has a historical core is restricted only to Alexander's life.[29] Hanaway has not taken into account the historical context of the text and he has not detected a number of historical elements in the narrative which can lead to reconstruct the historical context of the *Iskandarnāma*. It is suggested that the *Iskandarnāma* was compiled over several periods. The literary and historical core of the narrative, as it has been preserved so far, shows that it was probably compiled for the first time during the reign of the Ghaznavid Sulṭān Maḥmūd (997-1030 AD). It was probably re-compiled by Maḥmūd's Ghaznavid successors (1030-1186 AD), such as Muḥammad I and Mas'ūd I. It is also suggested that the narrative has undergone an unidentified number of compilations before reaching the form in which it has been preserved today. According to the technical details of the Tehran manuscript, it should be dated to the fourteenth century, as has been suggested by Afshār. The analysis is twofold; while the date of the manuscript is based on its technical details, the date of the narrative is a different issue and is related primarily to the historical evidence of the narrative.

The current analysis focuses entirely on the early stages of the compilation of the narrative (not the manuscript) during the eleventh and twelfth centuries. This was the period when the major body of the narrative was most likely formed by a certain author, and probably not a scribe. All prose romances were produced by an author and the *Iskandarnāma* cannot be an exception, because both the richness and the relatively careful arrangement of the content suggest that they resulted from the erudition of a man of letters. There are two arguments for dating the narrative: first, the profile of the protagonist hero Alexander; second, the repertoire of stories and their role in the narrative and their historical reflections.

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[29] W.L. Hanaway, 'Formal Elements in the Persian Popular Romances', *Review of National Literatures*, 2 (1971), 140.

i. First stage of compilation: Sulṭān Maḥmūd's reign (997-1030 AD)

Alexander - Sulṭān Maḥmūd

Before entering the discussion about the profile of the hero, it is necessary to analyze the mention of Sulṭān Maḥmūd's name in the *Iskandarnāma.*[30] His name appears in the sixteenth story titled *'The Story of the Youth who was sleeping in the Garden and the Scorpion and the Snake and the Wonder that the king saw'.*[31] This story follows the story of Alexander's exodus from the Land of Darkness and his failure to find the Water of Life. Being in a mysterious land, Alexander meets an old man who copies out and gives the king a prayer of thirty names of God. By virtue of these names, Alexander. like Moses who drowned the Pharaoh, will be able to cross the Vast Sea of Khazārs (Caspian Sea and not the "Indian Ocean" of Southgate).[32] These prayers could probably constitute an Islamic alternative for a legitimate ruler, replacing the pre-Islamic concept of *farr.*[33]

On hearing this, Alexander becomes happy. At this point[34] there are two paragraphs (eleven lines in the edited text) that should be considered as an amendment intervening between the parts 217:19 and 218:10. These lines do not affect the evolution of the plot: it is obvious that, once Alexander becomes happy[35] due to the fact that the old man copied the names for him, then he can depart with those names for the sea.[36] Hence what is the purpose of these eleven lines? By adding them the author aims to achieve two goals: first, to attribute more religiosity to the importance of these divine names. It is the same prayer that Daniel recited to subdue the lions and Solomon to master the wind;[37] second, to introduce Sulṭān Maḥmūd as a pious ruler. In the second intervening paragraph it is written:

> *"And at the time of Sulṭān Maḥmūd, the son of Sebüktigīn, may God have mercy (upon him), these names fell to his hands and ordered 'Abū Sa'īd Khargūshī to copy them. And (Sulṭān Maḥmūd) gave him 1,000 western dīnārs. And he took these names in gold in*

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[30] See n. 23.
[31] "داستان جوان که در باغ خفته بود و کژدم و مار و آن شگفتی که شاه دید", *IN,* 213; Southgate, 60.
[32] Southgate, 210. n.43.
[33] Hanaway has insightfully suggested that the ninety names of God form a substitute of the concept *farr* in Persian romances, see. Hanaway, 189.
[34] *IN,* 217:19.
[35] Ibid., 217:19.
[36] Ibid., 218:10.
[37] Ibid., 217:20-218; Southgate, 63.

extent and size. And all conquests and wars for the faith that Sulṭān Maḥmūd conducted were accomplished because of the Bless of this prayer. And Alexander gave 2,000 Khusravānī durusts to the old man to copy them (the names) for him"

و به روز سلطان محمود بن سبکتگین رحمه الله این نامها بدست اوفتاد و شیخ ابو سعید خرگوشی رابخوانند تا آن را نسخت کرد و هزار دینار مغربی بدو داد و این نامها را در زر گرفت و بربازو بست. هر فتح و غزایی که سلطان محمود کرد از برکت این دعا بود.

و اسکندر دو هزار درست خسروانی بدان پیر داد تا آن را نسخت کرد.[38]

In terms of syntax, these lines are differentiated from the previous paragraphs and the following ones in the following points. The sentences are introduced and connected with the conjunctive "و", while in the previous and following paragraphs the author uses mainly "پس" or "چون". Moreover, the sentences in these intervening lines are short, something that is not the case with the preceding and following sentences.

As mentioned above, in terms of meaning, these lines do not offer new information. By contrast, they act as an unnecessary amendment to what has already been mentioned. The examples of the prophets are revealing in that the name of Moses has already been mentioned two lines above in the Persian original,[39] as a sign of the sacred character and power of this prayer. The intervening lines dealing then with the example of Daniel and Solomon appear as an unnecessary *excursus*.[40]

The first six of these lines act as prelude to Sulṭān Maḥmūd's example, which is the main purpose of the author for adding these lines. By focusing on the sanctity of these thirty names of God, the author mentions Sulṭān Maḥmūd as the man who also acquired these names and, just like Alexander, he also employed them in his conquests. Hence, the purpose of these lines is to compare Sulṭān Maḥmūd and Alexander. The comparison is clear: Alexander and Maḥmūd, both found this prayer, each one in his time. Both employed wise men (Alexander the old pious man and Maḥmūd his scholar Khargūshī). Both rewarded the copying of these prayers by paying with money. The comparison and equation of the two heroes to this point is reflected through the different amount and rare

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[38] *IN*, 218:5-9.
[39] Ibid., 217:17.
[40] Ibid., 217:20.

types of valuable coins that each one paid for reward: Sulṭān Maḥmūd gave 1,000 *maghribī dīnārs* while Alexander gave 2,000 *khusravānī durusts*. By *maghribī dīnārs* the author presumably means the Fatimid gold *dīnārs* (tenth-eleventh centuries AD) which could be found only in the western Muslim world because of the complete lack of gold in Iran.[41] The *khusravānī durusts* were probably a rare type of silver dirhams of high quality which were in use as late as the tenth century. Information about this type of currency is scarce.[42] In Iranian monetary policy silver coins were traditionally used. Nevertheless in the early eleventh century AD, a period coinciding with Sulṭān Maḥmūd's reign, silver coins could hardly been found because of the lack of silver.[43] That means that the presence of the *durusts* is an implication of their precious value. Southgate suggests that the *durusts* might have also been gold coins.[44] Yet, given the lack of gold in Iran, it could be suggested that the *durusts* which Alexander pays are silver coins and are used in the narrative as an antithesis to the amount of *maghribī (gold) dīnārs* which Maḥmūd pays. The exact monetary value and weight standards of *dīnārs* and *durusts* were unstable in the early eleventh century because of low minting standards in the case of *dīnārs* and lack of information in the case of *durusts*.[45] The *maghribī gold dīnārs* are certain more precious than the silver *durusts*. Given that Alexander's *durusts* are 2,000 and Mahmud's *dīnārs* are half (1,000), this could probably imply an equation between the type of coinage and the amount each hero pays. This monetary equation could probably be seen as an implication of the equation of the two heroes in terms of generosity and importance as rulers.

By presenting Alexander offering as much as Maḥmūd, the latter is successfully compared and equated with the legendary *double-horned one*. Moreover, there are some historical revelations, or at least implications, here: Maḥmūd planned to have his exploits

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[41] About the Fatimid gold dinars, see St.Album, M.L. Bates and W. Floor, 'Coins and Coinage', *Elr* 6, 19-20.

[42] Dr. Michael Bates in an email contact with the author of this thesis has kindly offered his knowledge about this rare numismatic evidence. The term *khusravānī* refers probably to the coinage of late Sasanian times and probably the reign of Khusraw II Parwez (590-628 AD). *Khusrawī* is a term used of the Arab-Sasanian coinage of the early Umayyad period, in reference to the use of the king's bust on that coinage. *Durust* is a general term which refers to a well-struck, high quality coin: the Sasanian coinage had a high reputation for quality and metal content.

[43] M. Bates, 'Dinar. ii. In Islamic Persia', *Elr* 7, 415.

[44] Southgate, 210:n.46.

[45] Bates, *op.cit.*

written down and for this reason he was accompanied by scholars in his campaigns. But the clear comparison remains intact raising key questions: how is the comparison of a historical personality (Maḥmūd) with a semi-legendary figure (Alexander) to be interpreted? Is this comparison a coincidence, since Maḥmūd's name is not mentioned again in the narrative? Or is there something more to be said about this comparison in the *Iskandarnāma*?

The answer to these questions is related to the profile of Alexander in the narrative. What is certain is that, while Bahār, Ṣafā and Afshār approached the names of Sulṭān Maḥmūd and Khargūshī as terms for dating only the manuscript, they did not go further to trace and analyze the clear comparison of Maḥmūd and Alexander. This comparison is the objective of this analysis.

Afshār was the first person to point out that the stories of the *Iskandarnāma* probably reflect historical events and circumstances of the author's time.[46] This assertion must be considered as valid due to the historical information that the narrative provides. It is the same assertion that is used in the following lines. Moreover, the above clear comparison between Alexander and Maḥmūd occurs only once in the narrative. Given that there is no other historical hero to be compared with the protagonist in the *Iskandarnāma*, the above comparison between Alexander and Maḥmūd implies that the legendary Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma* reflects Sulṭān Maḥmūd's alleged epic image or vice versa: Sulṭān Maḥmūd's life is compared to that of the legendary Alexander. This mutual relation could be summarized as the reflection of Sulṭān Maḥmūd's exploits in the *Iskandarnāma*. This theory is suggested below based on the comparison of the evidence of the *Iskandarnāma* with other Persian sources of the eleventh century.

The profile of the hero: *Ghāzī king*

The predominant role of Alexander as ruler in the *Iskandarnāma* is his constant fight against infidels (*dār al-kufr*).[47] Alexander is the pious Muslim champion who

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[46] *IN*, introd., 23.
[47] See p.170.

defends and spreads Islam aiming to annex the whole world into the *dār al-Islām*. Alexander is the protagonist on the battlefield. When he attacks the infidels, he utters the *takbīr* and his piety strengthens his soldiers' morale[48]. The *Iskandarnāma* is the oldest Persian prose account presenting Alexander as a Muslim warrior and king. This unique characteristic of the narrative is not a coincidence.

Bahār's and Afshār's linguistic observations (that place the text in the eleventh and twelfth century) and Afshār's assertion regarding the historical reflections in the narrative are valuable guides in the process of identifying the legendary Alexander with a historical king who lived in the eleventh century and embodied the model of the *ghāzī king*. The first one who succeeded in establishing this model was Sulṭān Maḥmūd whose image was emulated, unsuccessfully though, by his successors. In the centuries following his death, Sulṭān Maḥmūd remained as the one and only *ghāzī king* who campaigned along with his fellow *muṭaṭawwi'a* (=*volunteers*) against infidels mainly in India and Central Asia.[49] Maḥmūd employed the model of the orthodox *ghāzī king* for the formation of his own profile in his vast Ghaznavid kingdom, and this profile is attested in the poetic accounts of his court.[50] Intimately related to the model of *ghāzī king* are the issues of piety and prayers taking place in both Alexander's and Maḥmūd's life. When his men are in despair due to the difficulties of their sea voyage, Alexander advises them to turn to God and he instantly prostrates himself in prayer.[51] In Fairyland, Alexander inspires his terrified soldiers to attack the fairies by uttering the *takbīr*. Thus, he makes the enemy fly away.[52] The same pattern of piety is found in Maḥmūd's deeds and image.[53] During the battle against the Qarakhānids (Ilak Khans) on 5th January, 1008 Maḥmūd was forced to retreat, with his men's morale at a low level. At that moment he abandoned the battlefield, went to a hill and there he prayed to God to grant him

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[48] *IN*, 358:11-12.

[49] M. Nāẓim, *The Life and Times of Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna* (Cambridge, 1931), 42-66, 86-122; C.E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids, Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran* (New Delhi, 1992[2]), 33, 114; idem, 'Ghaznavid Military Organisation', *Der Islam*, 36 (1960-1), 60. Bosworth notices that "*Maḥmūd did not want to convert souls in India but to have material gains*", idem, 'Ghaznavids', *EIr*, 10, 578; idem, 'The imperial policy of the Early Ghaznavids', *Islamic Studies*, 1 (1962), 54.

[50] For the poetic accounts, see below p.100; Bosworth, 'The titulature of the early Ghaznavids', *Oriens* (1962), 217-219; idem, 'Maḥmūd of Ghazna in Contemporary Eyes and in Later Persian Literature', *Iran*, 4 (1966), 87-89; Meisami, *Persian Historiogrpahy*, 42.

[51] *IN*, 88:5-6.

[52] Ibid., 358:11-12.

[53] Meisami, *op.cit.*, 74.

victory.[54] He, then, returned to the battlefield and his confidence inspired his soldiers. Maḥmūd attacked in the thick of the battlefield, defeating the Qarakhānids. The similarity between Alexander and Maḥmūd's piety is quite striking.

Military spirit is another important feature, reflecting the Ghaznavid era in the *Iskandarnāma*. Constant campaigning is a prominent feature contributing to the advancement of the narrative. Alexander is a king whose rule is not static; he is perpetually conducting warfare in order to advance the *dār al-Islām*. It is impressive that there is not a moment of peace in the narrative. Alexander fights constantly to expand his kingdom as much as possible before his forthcoming death. The hero has his private moments with his wives, but these are briefly mentioned and not described. Alexander is a tough warrior who does not hesitate to enter the battlefield and engage the enemy in single combat. He is intimately identified with warfare which is his top priority. This model of ruler is nearly identical to the model of Sulṭān Maḥmūd. The Ghaznavid ruler spent his long life in endless campaigns in order to expand his initially small kingdom and then secure it from external enemies. The Hindushāhīs, Qarakhānids, Ghūrids, Būyids, Saljūqs were the unfortunate enemies who suffered defeat at the hands of his hordes.[55] As a token of his bravery, the Sulṭān concealed his illness and continued campaigning in the last years of his life.[56] Maḥmūd was portrayed as an exemplary figure of a *ghāzī king* and an ideal case for comparison with the historical and legendary Alexander.

The layout of stories

Constant warfare is the prominent theme in the *Iskandarnāma*. All preserved fifty eight chapters deal with campaigns and wars. It can be suggested that the *Iskandarnāma* is a diary of Alexander's warfare. But this account does not have the usual layout of stories that are used in other works of the Persian Alexander tradition, such as the

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[54] "امیر محمود دو رکعت نماز گذارد و از خدای عز و جل فیروزی خواست..." (= *the general Maḥmūd performed two standings of prayers and he requested the victory from the Glorious God*), Gardīzī, *Kitāb Zayn al-Akhbār*, partial ed. M. Nāẓim (Berlin, 1928), 69.

[55] Nāẓim, 50, 59, 64-66; Bosworth, 'Ghaznavids', 578-579; W. Barthold, *Turkestan Down to the Mongol Invasion* (London, 1968), 280-285.

[56] Nāẓim, 123-124.

Shāhnāma. While Firdawsī's work was a vital source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*, the stories in the *Iskandarnāma* have quite a different arrangement.[57] The book is divided into two parts: the wars in the West and the wars in the East. This is stated in the narrative by Alexander himself: "*We have done with the West and we have recorded its wonders. Now begin a second book for the wonders of the East, that it be read after us, and we may be remembered by it, and our name may never die*".[58] This twofold geographical division of themes must be considered as an essential feature of the narrative, reflecting perhaps the initial compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* in the eleventh century. Apparently the author is not familiar with geography, given that he places the Indian campaigns and Ceylon in the West. Geographic accuracy is the least that the author is concerned with. His purpose is to associate geography with the legend of *dhu'l-qarnayn*, the one who conquered the West and the East.[59] Thus, the geographical aspect of the legend of the *double-horned one* is used as a substantial literary device for the layout of the stories.

It is striking, however, that this twofold division does not suggest the equality of the two parts. The first past, dealing with the West, is considerably restricted, covering only 221 out of the 770 pages of edited text. The other 549 pages deal with Alexander's wars in the East. The author uses the *Shāhnāma* as a vital source both, mainly for the first part of the book, the stories in the West and also the *Īrān-Turān* animosity in Central Asia in the second part of the narrative. Obviously, the author is less interested in Alexander's accomplishments in the West. His main focus is on the king's warfare in the East, compiling stories and details which are not found in other accounts of the Persian *Alexander Romance*. In Turkistān and Central Asia the struggle against the Turks is unusually lengthy. Why does the author show preference for the East? The answer lies in the historical reality of the author's (and the patron's) time. In other words, the patron of

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[57] *Shāhnāma* as a source is mentioned several times in the narrative (*IN*, 162:16; 191:13). In the *Shāhnāma* Alexander appears to travel all over the *oekoumene* and then to face death. His travels, however, cover almost equal space in the narrative.

[58] "*از مغرب باز پرداختیم و آن عجایبها نوشته آمد. اکنون کتابی دیگر آغاز کن تا احوال و عجایبها مشرق برآن ثبت کنی تا بعد از ما بخوانند و مارا یاد کنند و نام بدان زنده ماند*", *IN*, 220:14-16; Southgate, 65.

[59] "*خبر دادند که این پسر پدشاهی مشرق و مغرب خواهد کردن و گرد جمله جهان بگردد و جمله پادشاهان روی زمین را در زیر فرمان خود آرد و هیچ پادشاهی مقاومت او نتواند کردن و مال وخراج بوی گزارند*", (= *they predicted that this boy will reign over the East and the West and he will go all over the earth and subdue all the kings to his rule. No king will withstand him and everyone will pay tax to him*"...), *IN*, 4:22.

the *Iskandarnāma* was interested in reflecting stories that had taken place in the East during, or most probably just before. the compilation of the narrative.

The next question is why the author is interested in reflecting contemporary historical developments in eastern Iran. This is probably due to his patron's wish. By combining the arguments that have just been mentioned, it can be suggested that the focus of the second part of the book is a reflection of several factors, including the patron's personal interest, the audience who will receive it and the events surrounding the compilation. Using the western stories of the Alexander saga simply as an introduction to the main part of the narrative, the wars in the East, the author probably combines ingeniously in the narrative the fusion of legend and the historical developments in the eastern Iranian world of his time; more specifically, the author was interested in dealing with eastern Iran because the audience and the court where the *Iskandarnāma* was compiled were located on the eastern fringes of the Iranian world. Thus, contemporary historical developments in Turkistān and Central Asia would certainly attract the interest of the audience. Furthermore, the patron who ordered the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* was interested in creating, or reproducing, a legendary account of Alexander's life, an account which would place Alexander's deeds in a historical framework. This would both keep the narrative in the traditional geographical setting of Alexander's achievements and it would associate Alexander's life with the historical developments of the patron. So what were these events?

Maḥmūd's wars against the Hindushāhīs, the Qarakhānids, the Ghuzz, the Ghūrids and the Saljūqs in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries are well-documented, as are his successors' additional struggle against the Saljūqs, the Hindushāhīs and the Ghūrids in the eleventh and twelfth centuries.[60] Southeastern and northeastern Iran, northwestern India, Turkistān and Central Asia formed the frontiers where the Ghaznavid warfare was conducted. The Ghaznavid front was on the fringe of the Muslim world, facing the infidels, specifically in India and Central Asia. The front against their opponents changed from time to time, depending on occasional military and political circumstances. India was the focus of the Ghaznavid raiding and plundering in

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[60] For example of Mas'ūd I's troubles against the Saljūqs, see C.E. Bosworth, *The Later Ghaznavids, Splendour and Decay; the Dynasty in Afghanistan and Northern India,* 1040-1186 (New York, 1977), 9-17.

the name of Islamic expansion.[61] Sulṭān Maḥmūd established his profile as *ghāzī king* mainly due to his campaigns against India. On the northeastern frontier of the Ghaznavid Empire, however, the fierce and brave Turks of the steppe were always a dangerous source of problems for the stability of Ghaznavid rule in Khurāsān and Transoxiana.[62] While Maḥmūd was victorious against his enemies, in the last years of his life he was forced to accept the peaceful settlement of the Saljūq tribes in Khurāsān.[63] The preoccupation of Maḥmūd's successors with wars against the advancing Saljūqs characterized their rule in the eleventh century. After the battle of Dandānqān (1040), the Ghaznavids withdrew to their south-eastern dominions.[64] The Indian subcontinent became the refuge for Maḥmūd's declining dynasty. Coincidentally, these lands were also conquered or raided in history and legend by Alexander's expeditions. The Persian tradition of the cycle of Iranian kings was strong in eastern Iran, as was Alexander's image of semi-Persian king in the pantheon of the Iranian royal past.

The stories about India and Kashmir are restricted to five chapters.[65] By contrast, the Central Asian frontier is predominant in the narrative.[66] A common feature in these stories is *jiḥād* against the infidels. In India Alexander fights against the infidel Fūr's fierce resistance. The Indian king is eventually defeated and beheaded, for refusing to accept the Muslim faith.[67] Āzādbukht, the king of Kashmīr, and Kayd the king of Sarāndīb (Ceylon) are also described as infidels.[68] The chapter on Alexander's visit to the Tomb of Adam indirectly appears as Alexander's reward for the defeat of the infidels or at least as confirmation of his piety.[69] The fact that the Indians appear as infidels and Alexander as their Muslim persecutor forms a motif in the panegyric poetry of the Ghaznavid court, both with Alexander's and Maḥmūd's figures in the role of the Muslim hero.[70] Additionally, the military use of the elephants in the *Iskandarnāma* is also an

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[61] Gardīzī, 104; Bayhaqī, *Ta'rīkh-i Mas'udī*, ed. Q. Ghānī and A. A. Fayyāḍ (Tehran, 1324/1945), 501, 524. See also Bosworth, *op.cit.*, 30-33, 61-69.
[62] Idem, *Ghaznavids*, 219-226.
[63] Nāẓim, 62-64.
[64] Bosworth, *Later Ghaznavids*, 14-17.
[65] *IN*, 16-95.
[66] Ibid., 221 to the end.
[67] Ibid., 22:10-11.
[68] Ibid., 30:3; 82:20.
[69] Ibid., 86.
[70] See p.100.

interesting point. The elephants are used by the Indians against Alexander's army but Alexander defeats them by using bottles of naphtha with fire.[71] Later on, Alexander uses elephants as a part of his military strategy. These details also abound in the historical accounts and they are in accordance with the Persian tradition concerning Alexander's attitude to the Indian elephants on the battlefield. What is striking though is the author's notice that *"neither he nor his soldiers had ever seen so many elephants (gathered) in one place"*[72]. Does the author mean that Alexander and his men had previously seen elephants? If this is the case, then this notice is contrary to the well established notion that Alexander's men saw elephants for the first time in their life.[73] It is obvious that in the *Iskandarnāma* the author considers that Alexander and his men had already seen elephants before the Indian campaigns. In historical terms this is an important remark because Sulṭān Maḥmūd had also seen elephants on the battlefield in eastern Iran before his reign, when he was still a general of the Sāmānids.[74] Elephants were widely in use in warfare by the Sāmānids in Khurāsān and Central Asia. Later on in the narrative, Alexander uses elephants as one of his main weapons on the battlefield. This was also the case with Sulṭān Maḥmūd and his campaigns both in India and eastern Iran.[75] Thus, it could be assumed that Maḥmūd's deeds in India are reflected through Alexander's legendary profile in the narrative. There is, however, a point which puts this interpretation in doubt. If Sulṭān Maḥmūd's Indian campaigns are reflected in these four chapters of the *Iskandarnāma*, then why did the author not devote more space, given that the Indian campaigns were Maḥmūd's great pride in his wars against the infidels?

It could be suggested that the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* in its first compilation during Maḥmūd's time probably had more stories concerning Indian campaigns. This, however, cannot be supported adequately because of lack of information. It is worth mentioning, however, that, while Alexander's stories in the Indian peninsula are quite a few compared to the whole body of both books (western and eastern parts), they form the backbone of the first book in terms of space (five stories out

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[71] *IN*, 19:12-13.

[72] "*او و لشکر او هرگز چندان فیل بیکجا ندیده بودند*.", ibid., 18:16.

[73] In the *Shāhnāma*, one of Alexander's spies drew a picture of an elephant. *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 547.

[74] Nāẓim, 44; Bosworth, 'Military organisation', 64.

[75] The use of elephants is widely attested in the historical account for the Ghaznavids. For example, see *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*, ed. Ja'far Mudarris Sādighī (Tehran, 1373/1994), 192.

of sixteen). The Indian stories are the only episodes where extensive warfare takes place in the first part of the *Iskandarnāma*.

In spite of this important role of the Indian stories in the *Iskandarnāma*, they cannot be compared to the overwhelmingly important Central Asian and eastern Iranian stories of warfare against infidels in the second part of the narrative. The land of Rūs must be seen as a legendary reflection of Khwārazmia (where Maḥmūd also operated in history) because of the previous reference to the Sea of the Khazars (mod. Caspian Sea) and the fact that in the story of Rūs Alexander appears to visit a seashore where there is a chest with a beautiful maiden.[76] Alexander short stop in the land of Rūs is the prelude to his advancement further eastwards, to Turkistan, to fight the fierce pagans of Central Asia. The name of the Firghāna valley on the middle Jaxartes River (mod. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) is also quoted in the narrative, confirming that the geographical context of the *Iskandarnāma* is not fictitious.[77]

War against pagans is symbolically expressed by describing them as ugly monsters. Zangīs, Davālpāyān, Divs, Elephant-Ears are those monster-like enemies of Alexander in his struggle to spread Islam. By coincidence, all of them, with the exception of the Davālpāyān, fight Alexander in Central Asia. Could these monsters be considered as a historical reflection of tribes fighting Sulṭān Maḥmūd and the rest of the Ghaznavid Sulṭāns in the twelfth century? Although nothing can be said with certainty on this issue, there are indications that some of these creatures could reflect historical foes of Sulṭān Maḥmūd and the Ghaznavids in general in eastern Iran.

The first authority to draw attention to the role of Turkish historical names in the narrative was Bahār, who suggested that names such as Shāhmalik, Arslankhān, Ṭafqāj-khān and others could be associated with historical personalities that lived in the fifth century AH/eleventh century AD.[78] Afshār first suggested that the narrative probably reflects aspects of the history of the Qarakhānid Turks in Turkistān.[79] His suggestion is in accordance with Barthold's theory concerning the historical identification of the

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[76] *IN*, 410-419.

[77] "...در فرغانه گذر کردم" (=... I (Alexander) crossed Firghāna...), ibid., 288:18.

[78] Bahār, *sabkshināsī*, 134; about 'Ṭafqāj', see O. Pritsak, 'Die Karachaniden', *Der Islam*, 31 (1953-1954), 20-21; Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 182.

[79] See p.79.

Qarakhānids with the 'pagan Turks' who were converted to Islam sometime in 960 AD.[80] Factors such as the citation of Turkish proper names (as well as the ethnic 'Turk') in combination with the fact that the text, linguistically, is dated to the eleventh century and that stories deal mostly with Turkistān and Central Asia may have historical correlations. They certainly, however, deal with the Turks in legend.

The legendary aspect of the Turks in the *Iskandarnāma* is clearly expressed through the legendary struggle between the Iranians and the Turanians, the legendary ancestors of the Turks. Alexander's association with the legendary royal Iranian cycle is a pillar in the formation of his Iranian identity.[81] He appears as the legitimate semi-Iranian king who comes to the borders of Iran and Turān, the Oxus River and Central Asia (Khurāsān, Transoxiana), in order to take revenge for the evil that the Turanians brought to Iran in the past.[82] This is manifested several times in the narrative through Alexander's visits to important places of the legendary royal Iranian past. Examples abound: he visits Siyāvashgard[83] and the tomb of Kay Khusraw[84] where he clearly expresses his hatred for the Turanians and their successors. Alexander claims descent from Luhrāsb, the legendary Iranian king.[85] With Alexander in Central Asia, the eternal hatred between Iran and Turān revives. But who lives in the *Lands beyond the River* (*mā warā al-nahr)* in the *Iskandarnāma*?

It is important here to add to Afshār's opinion that the *Iskandarnāma* gives a reflection of the Turks not from their perspective but from that of Iran. Alexander sets off for his campaign from within Iran proper. The Turks and the other monster-like enemies appear as the *other*; they are the infidel descendants of Turān. The *self* in the case of the narrative is the *Muslim Iranians*. This *self* is furthermore identified with the perspective of the patron who ordered the compilation of the narrative as well as the Persian-speaking audience or readers. But why did the author and the patron aim to point out this eternal struggle and dislike for the Turanians?

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[80] P.B. Golden, 'The Karakhanids and early Islam', in *Cambridge history of early Inner Asia,* ed. E. Sinor, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1990), 355.
[81] See p.133.
[82] For the meaning of Turān see V. Minorsky, 'Turān', *EI*[1], 4, 878-884.
[83] *IN*, 242-249.
[84] Ibid., 201:6-8.
[85] Ibid., 243:9-10.

The answer lies in the analysis of the *Iskandarnāma*. Although Afshār does not use the term as an argument for the existence of the Qarakhānids, the name of Qarākhān is attested once in the narrative: Shāhmalik`s daughter narrates to Alexander that her husband was a descendant of Qarākhān.[86] Given that it is attested in a prose romance, this relationship does not necessarily mean anything in terms of dynastical history in the narrative. Nevertheless, the quotation of such an important name suggests an implicit presence of the Qarakhānid dynasty in the *Iskandarnāma.*

Additionally, names such as Shāhmalik, Arslankhān and Buqrāquz have a historical core and they could be identified with some branches of the Qarakhānid dynasty.[87] Shāhmalik, in the *Iskandarnāma,* is the King of the East and dominates Turkistān. Although initially he enjoys friendly relations with Alexander, he soon becomes Alexander's main adversary.[88] Arslankhān, whom Southgate mistakenly calls *'Arsalankhān'* in her translation,[89] is Shāhmalik's brother (from Shāhmalik's mother's side) and displays allegiance to his brother, when he is under threat by the victorious Alexander. Buqrāquz is Shāhmalik's son; Alexander confronts an entire family, or dynasty. This dynasty is clearly associated with the House of Afrāsiyāb.[90] Shāhmalik and his family are one of the two main foes of Alexander in Turkistān. The others are the Zangīs.[91] It is necessary first to deal with the legendary reflection of the Qarakhānids through Shāhmalik's house.

In the *Iskandarnāma* Shāhmalik's kingdom and family are located in Turkistān and, given that they claim to be from the *House of Afrāsiyāb (Āl-i Afrāsiyāb)*, this suggests that they are a reflection of the Qarakhānids who also in history claimed descent from Afrāsiyāb, for they are called *Afrāsiyābī* Turks.[92] Another element is that Shāhmalik is called "king of Ṭaqmāj" or "king of the East". This implies that he was the king of Eastern Turkistān, while his brother Arslankhān was in Western Turkistān. This division

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[86] *"... و شوهر من از فرزندان قراخان بود"* (= ... and my husband was from the children of Qarākhān), Ibid., 363:15

[87] For the Qarakhānids, see Pritsak, *op.cit.*, 17-68; Bosworth, 'Īlek-Khāns or Karakhānids', *EI*^{2}, 3, 1113-1117; idem, *The New Islamic Dynaties,* 181-185.

[88] *IN,* 313.

[89] Southgate, 82, 98, 115, 134 and so on.

[90] *IN,* 221:3.

[91] Ibid., 324.

[92] Nāẓim, 47; Pritsak, *op.cit.*, 20; R.N. Frye, *The Golden Age of Persia* (London, 1975), 220-221; Golden, *op.cit.*, 354.

of Turkistān under the Qarakhānids is historically attested in Maḥmūd's era.[93] Moreover, the Qarakhānids had adopted the Turkish dual ruling model,[94] according to which two members of the same family, usually brothers, ruled simultaneously, each one in his own realm. In the case of facing a common enemy, however, they could easily join their forces in order to face the threat. This happened in 1008, when Maḥmūd successfully faced the united forces of the Qarakhānids near Balkh.[95] All these details clearly suggest that Afshār's initial remark that it is about a reflection of the Qarakhānids is valid after all.

Although the reflection of the Qarakhānids in the narrative is obvious, the names of the kings are legendary and cannot be identified with any relative names and developments in history, especially due to the fact that the names of leaders such as Shāhmalik, Arslankhān and Bughrā Khān are met many times in Eastern Iran and Central Asia in the eleventh and twelfth century.[96] A brief look at the historical personalities of this period is useful because it confirms the previous assertion.

The name 'Shāhmalik' is widely attested in historical sources; the Ghuzz ruler Shāh-Malik b. 'Alī of Jand and ally of the Ghaznavid Mas'ūd I defeated the Khwārazmians in 1041 AD.[97] Abu 'l-Fawāris Shāh-Malik b. 'Alī (late tenth century) was Yabghu's nephew (elder line of the Ghuzz) and he was in conflict with the Saljūqs, the other line of the Ghuz.[98] Shāhmalik drove Ismā'īl b. Khāndān out of Khwārazm but Mas'ūd I himself was dead by then (1041 AD). The Turkmens then deprived the Ghaznavid Empire of Khwārazm.[99] After his defeat by the Saljūqs in Khwārazm, Shāhmalik fled to the Qïpchaq steppe (1041-2 AD).[100]

In regard to the name 'Buqrāquz', the son of Shāhmalik in the *Iskandarnāma*, there is no such name in the historical events of the period. There are, however, names that have the main component 'Buqrā'.[101] The closest example is that of *Buqrājuq*, the

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[93] Ibid., 219, 221.
[94] E.A. Davidovich, 'The Karakhanids', in Asimov and Bosworth, 126-130.
[95] Ibid., 219.
[96] About the terms Arslan and Buqra, see Pritsak, *op.cit.*, 22-24.
[97] Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, 177.
[98] Ibid., 221-222.
[99] Ibid., 239.
[100] Ibid., 223.
[101] Idem, *Islamic Dynasties*, 181.

uncle of Sulṭān Maḥmūd and governor of Herāt and Fūshanj.[102] He assisted Maḥmūd in the latter's advance to Nīshāpūr (386/996 AD) and was killed in Sīstān.[103]

Another example is that of Bughrā Khān Hārūn, the Qarakhānid Khān who conquered Bukkhārā in 990 AD.[104] Another ruler with the same name of the eastern branch of the Qarakhānids lived in Mas'ūd I's reign. In 1037 AD Bughrā Khān b. Qādir Khān (Qarakhānid ruler) received an embassy from Mas'ūd who wanted to restore their relations. Bughrā Khān was Qādir's son and an important ally against Alītigin and the Western Qarakhānid branch.[105]

As for the name 'Arslankhān', Shāhmalik's brother in the narrative, there are similar names in history.[106] For example, Manṣūr Arslān Khān, the so-called al-Aṣamm (the Deaf One), died in 1023 AD.[107] There is also the case of the Qarakhānid ruler Arslankhān *Sulaymān b. Qādir Khān Yūsuf*. He was the recipient of Mas'ūd I's letter in the aftermath of the latter's defeat in Dandānqān (1040 AD).[108] But he could offer little political help to Mas'ūd.[109] The above Arslankhān was son of Alītigin or 'Alī b. Ḥasan or Hārūn Bughrā Khān. In 1031 AD negotiations began for the marriage of Mas'ūd himself with the Khan's daughter Shāh Khātūn, and of Mawdūd with the daughter of the Khān's eldest son and heir, Bughrātigīn Sulaymān. Another example was *Arslankhān 'Ain al-Dawla,* who lived in Mawdūd's reign.[110] Another ruler was *Arslankhān Muḥammad b. Sulaymān* (1102-1130 AD), who was a kinsman and tributary to the Saljūq Sulṭān Sanjar on the Qarakhānid throne in Bukhārā and Samarqand.[111]

The examples above make it clear that the 'king of Turkistān' and his dynasty in the *Iskandarnāma* cannot be identified with precise historical personalities of the

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[102] Nāẓim, 32, 39.
[103] Ibid., 37, 67.
[104] Ibid., 27, 178, 221.
[105] Ibid., 178.
[106] Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 184.
[107] He succeeded in the Qarakhānid kingdom his brother Aḥmad Tughān Khān who had succeeded previously his brother Īlak Khān (403/1012-1013). Ibid., 52-53.
[108] Bayhaqī, 630; Bosworth, *Later Ghaznavids*, 7.
[109] Bayhaqī, 629, 643, 659; Bosworth, *op.cit.*, 14.
[110] Early in his reign Mawdūd received an embassy and offers probably from the Qarakhānid Böritigin, the "king of the Turks" in Transoxiana. Böritigin with the title 'Bughrākhān' was ruling Bukhārā in 433/1041-2 as co-Khāghān of his brother Arslan Khān 'Ain ad-Dawla Muḥammad b. Naṣr of Özgend. The Ghaznavid-Qarakhānid military action against their common enemy, the Saljūqs, occurred only in the reign of the late Mawdūd. See Barthold, *Turkestan*, 304; Bosworth, *op.cit.*, 26.
[111] Ibid., 94-95.

eleventh and the twelfth centuries. This is because no combination of these names in the *narrative* is attested in the historical accounts of this period. Hence. it could be asserted that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* used these names only as literary devices. The *Iskandarnāma* was written for entertainment and not for historical narration. This does not mean, however, that the wars of Alexander in Turkistān, as described in the narrative, do not reflect historical events. By contrast, the reference to a particular kingdom and region (Turkistān), the association of this kingdom with the '*House of Afrāsiyāb*' as well as the profile of Shāhmalik and his family as the descendants of the eternal foes of the Iranians could reflect in the *Iskandarnāma* the eastern and the western branches of the Qarakhānids, one of Sulṭān Maḥmūd's substantial foes.

The motif of infidel Turks

A basic feature of the people in Turkistān is their idolatry. The above pre-Islamic Iranian division of the universe into Iran and Turān is harmonically fused with the Islamic division of the universe into *dār al-Islām* and *dār al-ḥarb*. The people of Turkistān, the Turān, are at the same time the backbone of the *dār al-ḥarb* which opposes *dār al-Islām* in the *Iskandarnāma*. Thus, Iranians are identified with the virtuous and zealous Muslims while Turks (Turān) are identified with the infidels (*dār al-kufr*).

While Turkistān is given as one geographical entity in the narrative, symbolizing Central Asia or *the lands beyond the river*, the people who live there are not described as having one ethnic entity. There are the 'Turks',[112] but apart from this definition the author uses literary techniques, and symbols in particular, in order to describe the infidel *other*. The main literary tool is the negative description of the infidel warriors, as ugly and beast-like beings, such as the giants, Davālpāyān and Zangīs. The latter due to their important role in the narrative are of particular importance.

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[112] *IN*, 221:15.

The term *Zangī* literally means 'black' and more specifically 'African black'. The Zangīs in Persian literature of Islamic times form a savage nation of black-skinned people who live in Abyssinia or east Africa and fiercely oppose Islam.[113] They are the personification of ugliness and symbols of idolatry for Muslims. In the Persian Alexander tradition, the Zangīs as Alexander's adversaries appear also in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, in Ṭarsūsī's *Dārābnāma* and in Niẓāmī's *Iskandarnāma.*[114] Especially in Niẓāmī's account they are described in the same fashion but their location is totally different than that in the prose *Iskandarnāma*: they dominate the land between southern Egypt and Abyssinia.[115] In fact, this is the 'natural' geographical setting for the Zangīs since they are historically associated with the African continent. In the poem of the *Iskandarnāma* the Zangīs are fierce idolater warriors who are ready to prevent Alexander from continuing his campaign.[116]

In the prose *Iskandarnāma,* however, this is not the case. Here the Zangīs are described as having the same image, as Alexander's infidel adversaries. They form a necessary obstacle that Alexander needs to overcome. However, their role in the plot is slightly different. They do not appear at the early part of Alexander's campaign. By contrast, they appear in the middle and later stages of the plot.[117] They play a prominent role as Alexander's foes in Turkistān and Central Asia. The episode of the Zangīs as direct foes of Alexander follows his visit to Russia.[118] Once Alexander arrives in the Land of Zangīs, he encamps outside the fort of the king of Zangīs Qātil and, after several discussions with the messengers of Qātil, he starts fighting against the blacks.[119] The king's wars against the fierce Zangīs are endless throughout the rest of the narrative. However, step by step King Alexander defeats the Zangīs.

The striking similarities in Niẓāmī's poetical account and the *Iskandarnāma* prose romance suggest that it is the same story which has been used in a different context by the author of the prose *Iskandarnāma*. Here the Zangīs are not only a preliminary

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[113] B. Lewis, *Race and Color in Islam* (New York 1971), 30; M. Southgate, 'The Negative Images of Blacks in Some Medieval Iranian Writings', *Iranian Studies,* 17 (1984), 10-13.
[114] Southgate, *op.cit.*, 17.
[115] For example, see Niẓāmī Ganjavī, *The Sikandar Nama-e Bara or Book of Alexander the Great*, trans. H. Wilberforce Clarke (London, 1881), 223.
[116] Ibid., 209.
[117] *IN*, 324.
[118] Ibid., 409.
[119] Ibid.,420.

obstacle in Alexander's endeavour to conquer the world but rather they form one of the primary and unsurpassed obstacles. The Zangīs have the same image of infidel blacks in the prose *Iskandarnāma*. However, they are located in Central Asia, and this is the key detail. Why did the author decide to copy a story which was traditionally taking place in East Africa and transplant it hundreds of thousands of kilometres away, in Turkistān and Central Asia? How does the image of the African black coexist with the geographical environment of Central Asia? It could simply be assumed that, since the *Iskandarnāma* is primarily a legendary account, then anything can happen about its repertoire. In legends there are no strict rules about the arrangement and type of the stories. But things are not so simple.

The fact that the author transplants a story from the African region into eastern Iran and Central Asia is certainly not accidental. The key issue for the author is the great extent of the infidelity of the African Zangīs. By relocating them to Turkistān and the region nearby, he ingeniously transfers symbolically the front line of the *dār* al-*ḥarb* from Africa to Central Asia. Why does he do that? Probably because the author wanted to reflect in his account the struggle between the forces of Islam and the infidels in eastern Iran and Transoxiana. By using the well-established image of the invincible black African infidels in eastern Iran as a literary device, the author expresses the importance of conducting *jiḥād* on north-eastern fringes of the Muslim world. He increases the military skilfulness and virtue of the *'Zangīs'* in order to praise the legitimate endeavour of the pious Muslim king and his soldiers to fight those infidels. Thus, the ultimate goal of the author is to focus indirectly on the importance of warfare for the righteous and pious king Alexander against the infidel Turks, or at least a branch of the Turkish confederacy.

The Zangīs appear in the narrative not as Turks. On the one hand, Shāhmalik and his Turkish dynasty rule Turkistān, but on the other hand, the Zangīs are something different and mysterious. They have their own kingdom and, when they realize that they cannot defeat Alexander on their own, they join Shāhmalik's forces against the Muslim king. Predictably, the Zangīs cannot be identified with any historical peoples. It can be assumed though that they are a tribe(s) probably related to the Turkish line. The use of their name, Zangīs (=blacks) is intentionally used by the author in order to maximize the extent of their fearsome ugly appearance and hence, idolatry. The Zangīs as a reflection

of infidels are ingeniously used in the *Iskandarnāma*. personifying the enemies from the land beyond the river against whom *jiḥād* was conducted, not only in Sulṭān Maḥmūd's time but also during the reign of predecessors, successors as well as the Saljūq Sulṭāns (eleventh and twelfth centuries). What is important though is that the 'African' Zangīs are used in the *Iskandarnāma* in a central Asian environment in order to strengthen the military merit of the infidels and point out the importance of *jiḥād* in the eastern Iranian *thughūr*.

Another historical term which could be related to Sultān Mahmūd and the Ghaznavids in general is the name of *Ayāz.*[120] It is well known that Ayāz was Sulṭān Maḥmūd's private male slave of Yimek origin. Several assertions have been expressed concerning their ambiguous relationship (spiritual or physical).[121] Ayāz's influence on Sulṭān Maḥmūd was considerable and even after Maḥmūd's death, Ayāz was able to influence the political developments, favouring and deposing Maḥmūd's son, Muḥammad.[122] In the *Iskandarnāma*, Ayāz does not appear in the same context. He is also a Turk who arrives as Arslankhān's second messenger to Alexander. Once he meets Alexander, he decides to become his servant and to embrace Islam.

Apart from the association of Ayāz with Maḥmūd, the same name (Ayāz) is also attested in the Ghaznavid Majdūd's reign. Ayāz Khāṣṣ was the adviser of Mas'ūd I's son, Majdūd. In particular, Ayāz advised Majdūd to march from Multān and occupy land for himself in the Indus valley before Majdūd's sudden death (1043-4).[123] There are some similarities between the historical and legendary Ayāz here. His name could have been used in the narrative in an embellishing way, as a literary device for the reflection of Maḥmūd's or the Ghaznavids in the *Iskandarnāma*.

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[120] Ibid., 666:14-21.
[121] Bosworth states that *"the ethical climate of the time hardly frowned on such connections"*. Bosworth, *Later Ghaznavids*, 103, 138, 228.
[122] Bayhaqī, 82; Gardīzī, 93-5; Nāẓim, 52-53; Bosworth, *op.cit.*, 103.
[123] Ibid., 33.

Apparently there exists a strong association between Alexander and Sulṭān Maḥmūd's profiles. This correlation implies that Sulṭān Maḥmūd or one of his associates (*dihqān, provincial governors*) could have wished to have the *Iskandarnāma* compiled during his lifetime in order to indirectly associate him (Maḥmūd) with Alexander the *double-horned one* and propagate his deeds. The above analysis was based on the evidence coming from the *Iskandarnāma* itself in combination with other sources. However, is the analysis of the *Iskandarnāma* enough to support such a theory? Apparently not. In order to detect if there was a similar association between Maḥmūd and Alexander, it is also important to investigate the historical evolution of the ruler's image and royal propaganda in the Ghaznavid court, according to several literary accounts of the Ghaznavid era. For example, by analyzing passages from the panegyric poetry of the Ghaznavid court, it will become clear whether Maḥmūd had pursued a similar association with the legendary Alexander in other genres of Persian literature. By analyzing the historical data of the Ghaznavid period about the image of the ruler, an attempt will be made to frame and combine the evidence of the *Iskandarnāma* with the information coming from the rest of the literary tradition of the Ghaznavids.

With such striking similarities between Alexander and Maḥmūd in the *Iskandarnāma*, it is plausible to ask if there are any indications in other works of the Gahznavid period suggesting that Alexander was used as a device by Maḥmūd and the Ghaznavids. And if so, why would Maḥmūd be so interested in Alexander`s *persona*?

Concerning the first question, it must be noted that Alexander has a fused profile as a Muslim Persian hero in the Persian literary tradition under the Ghaznavids. This profile is closely associated with Sulṭān Maḥmūd and other Ghaznavid rulers. In order to establish a literary connection between Alexander and Maḥmūd, it is necessary to analyze the image of Alexander in the panegyric poetry of the Ghaznavid court. This type of poetry aimed to praise the role and policy of the ruler within the political apparatus of that time. References to a literary association of Maḥmūd and Alexander abound in

several sources. In Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's maqāmāt, Maḥmūd is directly compared with Alexander, when the poet asks Maḥmūd *"Is it Faridūn with his crown, or a second Iskandar (Alexander)?"*.[124] This comparison, or even identification, of Maḥmūd with Alexander is of particular importance and it can also be detected in other poems of Maḥmūd's reign. The qasidas in the *Dīwāns* of 'Unṣurī, Farrukhī and Manūchihrī are of particular importance for the model of ruler they reflect. They are briefly analyzed here in regard to the profile of Alexander and Maḥmūd.

Regarding 'Unṣurī's account, it was written in order to praise Maḥmūd for his exploits against the infidels and the establishment of his admirable empire.[125] The role of Alexander as a device for comparison with Maḥmūd's achievements is important. Alexander the *double-horned one* (*iskandar dhu'l-qarnayn*) along with Solomon are the two king-prophets of Islamic lore. They are used as a model for comparison with Maḥmūd. Alexander's name is mentioned five times in Unṣurī's account and in all cases the main feature of his life is the establishment of the so-called *'sadd-i Iskandar'* (*'Alexander's dam'*). According to the Quranic tradition, this dam was constructed by the *double-horned one* in order to secure the world from the evil forces of the Gog and Magog.[126] Alexander's dam is used in 'Unṣurī's work as a motif in order to propagate Maḥmūd's military achievements.[127] In fact, 'Unṣurī believes that Maḥmūd's empire and army form another dam protecting the realm of Muslims (*dār al-Islām*) from the realm of infidels (*dār al-kufr*). The poet praises Maḥmūd and suggests that Maḥmūd's dam is equally important to that of Alexander:

> *"Your dam is your sword, may your hand be blessed /*
> *Where is Alexander now to see the dam of your men?"* [128]

In Farrukhī's *Dīwān*, the comparison between Alexander and Maḥmūd is also attested.[129] Alexander is again mentioned here several times as the ideal Muslim Persian

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[124] C.E. Bosworth, 'The Heritage of Rulership in Early Islamic Iran and the Search for Dynastic Connections with the Past', *Iranian Studies,* 11 (1978), 7-34.
[125] Abu 'l-Qāsim 'Unṣurī, *Dīwān*, ed. Y. Qarīb (Tehran, 1323/1944), 25,28,47.
[126] See p.165.
[127] 'Unṣurī, *Dīwān*, 33,60,79,140,141.
[128] *سدّ تو شمشیر تست اندر مبارک دست تو"*
کو سکندر گوبیا تا سدّ مردان بنگری', ibid., 141.
[129] Farrukhī Sīstānī, *Dīwān*, ed. M. Dabīr Siyāghī (Tehran, 1335/1956).

ruler. The only difference in Farrukhī's account is that the poet. unlike 'Unsurī. does not restrict himself to the story of Iskandar's dam as the only story of Alexander's legendary life. By contrast, Farrukhī uses several examples from Alexander's life and compares them to Sulṭān Maḥmūd's exploits. The poet expresses his admiration for Alexander's kingship and military strength[130] as well as his deed to explore and conquer the whole world, thus indirectly praising Maḥmūd.[131] Alexander is equated to Khusraw Anūshīrwān's glorious position in the cycle of Iranian and Muslim kings.[132] Farrukhī compares Maḥmūd with Alexander:

> *"which valley and which paradise of Fereydūn / which garden and which battlefield of Alexander,*
> *something good has resulted / from the paintings and the idols you smashed..."*[133]

Farrukhī uses Alexander as a device not only to praise Maḥmūd but also his sons and successors, Muḥammad and Mas'ūd. What is important in regard to the association of Alexander and Maḥmūd is that the formulae that the poet uses in the qasidas in honour of Mas'ūd or Muḥammad reflect the model of the *ghāzī king* and in general the model of the ruler that Maḥmūd established before. The use of the same motifs and model both for Maḥmūd and his sons in Farrukhī's *Dīwān* reflects the tendency of Maḥmūd's successors to be associated with the image of ruler that the son of Sebuktigīn had established. Thus, when Farrukhī praises Mas'ūd in his qasidas, it is the same literary tradition of Maḥmūd as ideal ruler that both the poet and the Sulṭān desire to use and adopt.

Manūchihrī is another important poet of the Ghaznavid court in Maḥmūd's reign and after him. Manūchihrī has not apparently included Alexander as a literary figure in his Persian account.[134] He also promotes the same model of the *ghāzī king* for Sulṭān Maḥmūd.[135] As for Alexander, his name is cited three times: *"(he is an) Alexander who gathers people around him"*,[136] "You are not Alexander but you explored twice this

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[130] Ibid., 2:19-20.
[131] Ibid., 66:1267-1277.
[132] Ibid., 248:4947.
[133] "چه صحرا و چه بزمگاه فریدون / چه بستان و چه رزمگاه سکندر
ز نقاشی و بتگیریها که کردی / ز تو خیره مانده است نقاش و بتگر", ibid., 83:1573-1574.
[134] Manūchihrī Dāmghānī, *Dīwān*, ed. and French trans. by A. de Biberstein Kazimirsky (Paris, 1886).
[135] See below.
[136] "و سکندر محالف (است)", Manūchihrī, *Dīwān*, 5:33.

world, like Alexander",[137] *"the source of water was pressured by the ice like the bronze drums of Alexander"*.[138]

The comparison and association of Maḥmūd with Alexander in the above poetical works are quite obvious. Maḥmūd is praised for his legendary success in founding his empire and persecuting the infidels. Alexander is one of the models of the Perso-Islamic lore employed by the poets in order to extol their master's success and incorporate it in the Muslim literary tradition. Alexander's legendary image in the panegyric poetry of the Ghaznavid court proves that the Ghaznavids were aware of the rich Persian literary tradition related to the Greek hero. Moreover, the poets in the Ghaznavid court systematically used Alexander as a literary device in order to embellish the image of Sulṭān Maḥmūd. The latter must have relied on the pre-existing literary tradition of the Sāmānid court in order to make use of the Alexander Persian tradition. By associating himself with Alexander the *double-horned one*, Maḥmūd compared in political terms his accomplishments with those of one of Alexander's, one of the most popular heroes of Islamic lore in the Iranian world. This association could only be a benefit for Maḥmūd.

Another aspect of Alexander's legendary image in the panegyric poetry of the Ghaznavid court is that the literary tradition about Alexander was already known to the Ghaznavids from their predecessors, the Sāmānids. It can be assumed that the literary model of Alexander as a fused Perso-Muslim king had already been established in the Sāmānid court, or even before. This is based on two main arguments.

First, in Firdawsī's account, who worked first for the Sāmānids and then for the Ghaznavids, Alexander already embodied the Perso-Islamic dual image of ruler which Maḥmūd also adopted.[139] Presumably in the Sāmānid court, the legendary Alexander of pre-Islamic Iran had already been Islamicized following the general pattern of Islamization of Iranian history.[140] However, this model is not balanced in the *Shāhnāma*, given that Alexander in the section "*padishāhī-yi Iskandar*" is associated mainly with pre-Islamic Persian concepts and the pre-Islamic tradition prevails over the Islamic one. Given that Firdawsī was able to promote this dual model of Alexander in the late tenth

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[137] "سکندر نیستی لیکن دو باره / بکشتی در جهان همچون سکندر", ibid., 21:8.
[138] "شده آبکیران فسرده ز یخ چنان کوس روین اسکندران", ibid., 99:16.
[139] See also Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 41-42.
[140] Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 25.

century, this suggests that Alexander's Perso-Muslim profile in Persian literature and the eastern Iranian world was popular and flourishing.

Second, it is the linguistic evidence in the *Iskandarnāma* which points to pre-Ghaznavid literary evidence. In particular, archaic grammatical forms in the *Iskandarnāma* are also attested in tenth century eastern Iran and even earlier.[141] A series of expressions and grammatical features are common in the *Iskandarnāma* and Bal'amī's Persian translation of Ṭabarī or even Rūdakī's poetry.[142] Bahār analyzed them and pointed out their linguistic importance.[143] The presence of these archaic elements in the *Iskandarnāma* is enigmatic. It could mean that either they represent an earlier stage of the *Iskandarnāma,* or less likely it was a deliberate demonstration of the author's literary skills. The most probable is that at the stage of its compilation in the early eleventh century, the *Iskandarnāma* included archaic elements which harmonically coexisted with more updated literary forms. A useful example is that of the verbal suffix "ی-". At the beginning of the narrative, this archaic suffix is extensively in use while simultaneously other verbs do not have it.[144] The coexistence of the archaic and developed forms takes place within the same line[145]. But this phenomenon appears only at the beginning of the narrative while in the rest of it verbs do not have this archaic suffix. This could be interpreted as a deliberate effort of the author to use archaic forms as a device to display to his audience the antiquity, hence indisputable validity, of his story. However, the existence of other archaic forms, scattered in the rest of the narrative, could suggest a remote and indirect connection of the narrative with a pre-existing literary corpus.

Based on linguistic evidence, whether the *Iskandarnāma* was initially compiled in the Sāmānid court remains an open issue. As for the issue of the *ghāzī king* model, through the study of the narrative it cannot be proved if this model existed before the Ghaznavid times. It is very likely that in the Persian literature of the Sāmānid court, Alexander's Perso-Muslim profile might have been combined with the features of the *Ghāzī* hero in the remote Sāmānid provinces of Central Asia where the fight against the

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[141] For example, the form *bedish* is related to Dari and northern Pahlavi. Bahār, 146.
[142] The verb *sard yāftan* is used by Rūdakī and 'Ajadī. Bahār, 139.
[143] According to Bahār, there are a number of archaisms in the *Iskandarnama*. For example, the expression *'kam az'* which was in use in the tenth century AD. This is also attested both in Bal'amī and *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*. Bahār, 136.
[144] For example, *bisitudī* instead of *bisitud* (*IN*, 1:6) and "*nimūdī*" instead of "*nimūd*" (*IN*, 1:7).
[145] Ibid., 3:6,7-3:9.

infidel Turks was a daily routine.[146] Given that eastern Iran was the cradle of the Persian literary renaissance in the tenth century, it is very likely that Alexander's tradition was also strong and constantly developed in those lands. It is very probable that Alexander appeared as a *Ghāzī* champion whose legend inspired Muslims in their *jiḥād* against the infidels living *beyond the river*. However, due to lack of evidence, it cannot be asserted that Alexander was also used as a model of a *ghāzī king* (not simply a hero) in the Sāmānid court. Given that no Sāmānid ruler deliberately and intensively pursued the model of the g*hāzī king* it must be suggested that it was Sulṭān Maḥmūd who first established this model in political terms. He was the patron who dictated the literary establishment of this model in the case of Alexander's story. But why would Maḥmūd have chosen Alexander to associate himself with in political and propagandistic terms? The answer is twofold.

The first and most plausible factor is that Maḥmūd found in the pre-existing Alexander legend in the Persian literary tradition a model for political propaganda. For Maḥmūd, Alexander might have been a literary device which embodied the model of the perfect ruler amongst the Iranians. Maḥmūd was a brave ruler who appreciated the importance of literature for the public and private life of a king. He based the literary activity of his court on the pre-existing Sāmānid model.[147] Ruling an empire, the backbone of which was eastern Iran, Maḥmūd and the other Ghaznavids sought to use literary activity in their courts as a means of fostering their political power. As previously discussed, Alexander's tradition was widely popular in eastern Iran at that time. Thus, by patronizing works dealing with Alexander as a Muslim Persian hero and king, Maḥmūd advocated his indirect association with the model of the ideal ruler that Alexander probably embodied in the oral and written tradition of the Iranians after the advent of Islam and especially during the tenth century, a time of further expansion of the *dār al-Islām* in Central Asia and the Indian subcontinent.

Apart from the political importance of Alexander's popular vita in Iran, Maḥmūd probably had personal reasons for choosing Alexander as a model of ruler, not only in the literary tradition of his court for the promotion of his political agenda, but also as a model

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[146] R.N. Frye, 'The Sāmānids', in *CHI*, 4, 150-155.
[147] Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, 131-132.

for his personal image as a general and ruler. This assertion is based on the striking similarities between Alexander's and Maḥmūd's lives in history and in legend.

There are many similarities between Alexander and Maḥmūd's characters and lifestyles.[148] A comparative approach of their lives will reveal their similarities. In regard to their early years of life, few things are available for Maḥmūd's case.[149] As for their birth, both heroes are allegedly born under supernatural circumstances or including special omens foretelling the glorious future of the hero. In Alexander's birth the astrologers foresee his superhuman nature in legend[150] and in history[151]. The same motif of supernatural phenomena takes place in Maḥmūd's birth.[152] Alexander and Maḥmūd have also in common the feature of the semi-Iranian king.[153] Alexander in the Persian tradition is a Graeco-Iranian king: the son of the Iranian king Dārā II and the Greek princess Nāḥīd, king Faylaqūs' daughter. Maḥmūd is the son of the Turk general Sebuktigīn and an Iranian noble lady from Zābulistān.[154] His mother's aristocratic descent and the region of her origin ensure that Maḥmūd must have been well aware of the Iranian myths and legends related to the royal cycle of kings. It could be assumed that Maḥmūd was fully aware of Alexander's legendary life and the latter might have been one of Maḥmūd's models of rulership from the very beginning. However, due to the lack of evidence nothing more can be said.

Maḥmūd's lifestyle and achievements are similar to Alexander's. Both men became famous for the extensive and ephemeral empires they created. Alexander conquered Iran and so did Maḥmūd. In fact, Maḥmūd re-conquered the lands that once Alexander had also subdued: eastern Iran (Khurāsān, Sīstān, Makrān), Afghānistān, Balūchistān, Western Irān (Jibāl, Fārs), Central Asia and northwestern India, where they both faced and used elephants.[155] A common feature of both heroes is their invincible

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[148] Nāẓim, 34-38.
[149] Ibid., 35.
[150] *IN*, 4:22-5:1.
[151] P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon, A Historical Biography* (Los Angeles, 1991), 35-37.
[152] Nāẓim, 34.
[153] Alexander in the Persian tradition is a semi-Persian king and so was Maḥmūd in reality. Maḥmūd's mother was a noble from Zābulistān. She was probable of Iranian descent and although there is insufficient information about Maḥmūd's early years, it could be assumed that Maḥmūd was influenced by his mother's Persian origin and culture.
[154] *SN*, 85; trans. H. Darke (London, 2002[3]), 120.
[155] Green, *op.cit.*, 90; Bosworth, 'Military Organisation', 61.

military prestige. They both spent their lives in constant and successful campaigns. Both entered the battlefield at an early stage of their lives: Alexander at the age of eighteen and Maḥmūd at the age of fifteen.[156] Both fought personally on the battlefield and led their soldiers to victory. They fought each time defying danger and death. Alexander tried to overcome death and his human nature and he even achieved his deification in his lifetime.[157] Maḥmūd also tried to overcome his fear for death. This is proved by his constant presence as leader of his army, even when he was old and sick. For example, when he was about to die, he wanted to sit instead of lying on his bed.[158] Wherever they campaigned, they were victorious.[159]

Moreover, Alexander's historical and legendary magnanimous behaviour to Dārā and his family can be compared with Mahmūd's behaviour to his brother Ismā'īl. In the *Iskandarnāma*, Alexander campaigns against his half-brother Dārā in order to take the throne of Iran for himself, something that he legitimately deserves as Dārāb's son and elder half-brother of Dārā. Similarly Mahmūd gave the same battle against his brother Ismā'īl in order to gain the throne of the Ghaznavid Empire after their father's (Sebüktigīn) death.[160] Just like Alexander, Mahmūd repeatedly attempted to achieve reconciliation with his brother before the final battle. His attempt was not a sign of weakness but a sign of desire to avoid war against his brother.[161] The same magnanimous behaviour of Mahmūd is also attested in the case of the captured Qarakhānid 'Alītigīn and his family.[162]

Another similarity between Alexander and Maḥmūd is the notion of the ruler of East and West. Having thus conquered rapidly so many lands, Maḥmūd was sufficiently able to establish an empire based on his own prestige. The magnitude of his empire and the rapid character of his conquests, created the impression that Maḥmūd conquered the East and the West of the whole world. Indeed, Maḥmūd in the heyday of his power was able to rule west and central Iran (Jibāl, Ray) up to eastern Iran and northwestern India.

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[156] Nāẓim, 35-36.
[157] Green, *op.cit.*, 272.
[158] Gardīzī, 92; Nāẓim, 124.
[159] Ibid., 155.
[160] Nāẓim, 39.
[161] Ibid., 179.

[162] 'Alītigīn's wife and children were captured by Maḥmūd's allies in Samarqand but they were treated with respect due to their position. See Gardīzī, 84-85, Farrukhī, 251:5001, Nāẓim, 54.

In other words, he became the king of the East and West of the Iranian world. This was an unprecedented achievement for the standards of the Islamic world after the early decades of Muslim expansion.

Maḥmūd's accomplishment in uniting eastern and western Iran cannot be ignored when he is to be compared with Alexander. According to the Islamic tradition, the Graeco-Iranian hero was the first one to achieve such an accomplishment and in the Qur'ān he is mentioned as *dhu'l-qarnayn (=the double-horned one).*[163] One of the interpretations given for this name is that the horns symbolize the two ends of the earth, East and West, that Alexander was able to reach, conquer and unite.[164] Regardless of the identity of the *double-horned one* in the Qur'ān, the historical figure of Alexander was fused with that of the *dhu'l-qarnayn* in Islamic lore in early Islamic times. Gradually the terms *Iskandar* and *dhu'l-qarnayn* became synonymous in the several genres of Arabic and Persian literature. It is this tradition that Maḥmūd became familiar with, when he initially heard of Alexander.

Maḥmūd's achievement to create such a vast empire was officially recognized by the Abbasid caliph who credited Maḥmūd with a series of honorific official titles (*alqāb*) which were admittedly few but they were given for the first time to a Turk Muslim ruler: *sayf al-dawla (The Sword of State), yamīn al-dawla, (The Right Hand of State) amīn al-milla (The Truthful of the Community), and walī amīr al mu'minīn (The Friend of the Commander of the Faithful).*[165] These were the official titles that Maḥmūd used in his correspondence, coinage and other official occasions in regard to the caliph and the Arabic-speaking Muslims. But apart from these official Arabic titles, it is well known that the Ghaznavid ruler used a series of other, unofficial, titles which were both of Arabic and Persian origin: *sulṭān (king), shāhānshāh (king of kings), jahāngīr (world conqueror), shahrgīr (city conqueror) and jahāngushā (world-conqueror).*[166] These unofficial titles are attested in the Persian eulogistic poetry of the Ghaznavid court and they were used by Maḥmūd in eastern Iran, where Persian was the *lingua franca.* Their role was to enable him to establish and propagate his role as a legitimate ruler amongst

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[163] See p.163.
[164] Southgate, 97.
[165] Bosworth, 'Titulature', 215-219.
[166] Ibid., 220-223.

his Persian speaking subjects. It is within this geographical and linguistic environment that the *Iskandarnāma* was produced.

It must not be considered a coincidence that the notion of the ruler as conqueror of East and West is predominant in the narrative. This concept is expressed in two ways: first through the concept of Alexander *dhu'l-qarnayn* (see above), and second the division of the narrative in two parts, the first one dealing with Alexander's conquests in the West and the second one referring to the eastern campaign.[167]

Alexander is identified with the *double-horned one* from the very beginning.[168] The notion that the two horns are identified with the East and West is clearly expressed in the narrative through the several titles attributed to Alexander: he is the *shahrgīr* and *jahāngīr*, the ruler who conquered the East and West. Above all, he is the *padishāh-i sharq va gharb*[169]. The Quranic tradition of the *dhu'l-qarnayn* also appears through the use of the episode with the Gog and Magog, who symbolize the margins of the earth, since they live near to the Place of the Rising Sun[170].

The second device of the author to express the notion of *East and West* is by dividing Alexander's campaigns into two books taking place in the two destinations respectively. At the beginning of the book, the author emphasizes that the *Iskandarnāma* aims to narrate the deeds of Alexander the *double-horned one,*[171] the one whom the astrologers predicted that he will reign all over the world. The author also mentions that no-one will understand why *dhu'l-qarnayn* was thus named unless he reads the *Iskandarnāma*. Several theories have been suggested about the meaning of his name but it cannot become clear unless the author narrates the story from the beginning.[172] This phrase, in combination with the fact that the narrative is divided into two parts, suggests that the meaning of *dhu'l-qarnayn* is intimately associated with Alexander's conquest of the East and the West[173].

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[167] *IN*, 14:16.
[168] Ibid., 1:2.
[169] Ibid., 762:9.
[170] Ibid., 506:21.
[171] Ibid., 5:7.
[172] *IN*, 5:9-10.
[173] See p. 81.

ii. Second Stage of compilation: Maḥmūd`s Successors

The fact that the narrative was compiled probably by order of Maḥmūd does not mean that it was not recompiled after his death. Maḥmūd's sponsorship suggests the first phase of the narrative`s compilation. But when did the second phase take place? It was after Maḥmūd's lifetime. The text speaks for itself:

> *"And in the days of Sultān Mahmūd, the son of Sebüktigīn, may God have mercy (upon him),...."*[174]

The expression "*raḥmatullāhi*" clearly manifests that Maḥmūd was not alive at the time that these lines were written. Questions, such as *"how much time had elapsed between Maḥmūd's death and the time that these lines were written"* and *"who ordered the inclusion of Maḥmūd's name in the narrative"* are of crucial importance for the analysis of the second phase of compilation of the narrative. The answer lies both in the historical events after Maḥmūd`s death and the narrative itself.

After Maḥmūd's death in 1030 AD, his sons Mas'ūd and Muḥammad struggled to ascend the throne in Ghazna. It was the same story that took place after Sebüktigīn's death and the struggle between Maḥmūd and Ismā'īl for succession. Although Maḥmūd had appointed Muḥammad as his legitimate heir, Mas'ūd questioned his brother's legitimacy for the throne and after a brief military struggle he became the new Sulṭān. He did not kill his brother but he sent him to exile.[175] Mas'ūd, whose court though was known for its literary activity and the performance of storytellers,[176] saw the rapid decline of the Ghaznavid power and the ultimate defeat in Dandānqān (1040 AD) by the Saljūqs.[177] After Mas'ūd's death (1041 AD), his deposed and exiled brother Muḥammad re-ascended the throne and reigned for a year (1042 AD). Afterwards, the Ghaznavids were unable to reaffirm their dominions in eastern Iran and they were subsequently restricted to the south of the Hindukūsh in the Kabul valley. For the following two

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[174] "به روز سلطان محمود بن سبکتگین رحمه الله (علیه)", *IN*, 218:5-9.
[175] Bosworth, *Later Ghaznavids*, 228.
[176] Yamamoto, *Oral Background*, 53.
[177] Bosworth, *op.cit.*, 6.

centuries, the heart of their empire would be the northern and western Indian domains, with Ghazna as their capital.

What is common concerning Maḥmūd's immediate and long-term successors is that they all adopted the practices and model of Maḥmūd as the righteous and glorious Muslim ruler.[178] The model of *Ghāzī king* captured the imagination of Muslims not only in Maḥmūd's time but mainly after his death. His deeds became legendary and he was extolled more than any other Muslim ruler in the subsequent centuries in Persian and Turkish literature.[179] The *Iskandarnāma* must be seen as the first example of this literary tradition for Maḥmūd.

His sons, Mas'ūd and Muḥammad, followed their father's model of rulership in spite of the fact that they failed to be successful and preserve their father's dominions. They also faced the same foes in Central Asia, the Qarakhānids.[180] This is clearly expressed in their court literature and especially the panegyric and eulogistic poetry. The same poets who praised Maḥmūd continued working at the Ghaznavid court under the patronage of Mas'ūd and Muḥammad. As has already been analyzed, Alexander was a key figure in the literary tradition of the Ghaznavids. Maḥmūd compared himself to Alexander in several examples of panegyric poetry and predictably his successors followed their father's example.

Farrukhī composed various panegyric poems in honour of Sulṭān Muḥammad and later of Sulṭān Mas'ūd. For example, Muḥammad b. Maḥmūd is praised by Farrukhī and he is compared to Alexander. The latter's war and victory against Dārāb are used as a model of comparison for the victories of Muḥammad against the infidels.[181] Elsewhere it is stated that *"He (Sulṭān Muḥammad) spoke correctly: Dārā's army was defeated in the war against Alexander"*[182]; *"Is he like Fereydūn in terms of high honor, value and power / is he like the value and name of glory of Alexander?"*[183]; *"Since your childhood you started fighting/ ...../ You taught mankind manliness and with your bravery you*

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[178] For the case of Mas'ūd b. Maḥmūd, see Bosworth, *Ghaznavids*, 229.
[179] idem, 'Maḥmūd of Ghazna', 89-92.
[180] Barthold, *Turkestan*, 293-303.
[181] Farrukhī, 102:1958.
[182] "زاست گفتی سپاه دارا بود / کشته پین مصاف اسکندر", ibid.
[183] "ایا بمرتب و قدر و جاه افریدون / ایا بمنزلت و نام نیک اسکندر", ibid., 118:2287.

conquered and subdued the world like Alexander";[184] *"You turned majesty and kingship into a tree of euphoria, / just like when Alexander conquered the whole world".*[185]

In the case of Sulṭān Mas'ūd, Farrukhī compares him to Alexander in several cases; he mentions that *"the kings of the world were gathered at the door of your house, just like at the door of Alexander's (house)".*[186] Elsewhere, the poet states that Mas'ūd defeats his enemies and strengthens his kingdom, like Alexander who was campaigning every day.[187]

These examples show that the figure of Alexander, amongst other legendary figures (for example Solomon), continued to be a favourite one for Farrukhī and his Ghaznavid patrons. The poet used Alexander as a literary device in order to praise his Sulṭān. This is certainly a continuity of Maḥmūd's tendency to be associated with the legendary Alexander. Alexander's name and the use of the same symbols and comparisons in the panegyric poetry during the reigns of Maḥmūd and his successors clearly display the endeavour of Muḥammad and Mas'ūd to imitate their father in the propagation of his political agenda. Thus, Muḥammad and Mas'ūd were able to adopt, or even copy, their father's legendary and popular profile in order to consolidate their power.[188]

The above two arguments, Alexander's legendary image as a device for comparison of the Ghaznavid rulers and the adoption of the same ideal model as their father in the Ghaznavid court literature, could also be used to suggest that the *Iskandarnāma* might have also been patronized by Muḥammad and/or Mas'ūd I each one during his reign. If one is to accept the assumption that Maḥmūd was the patron of the first compilation of the narrative, then who else than his sons and immediate successors could have ordered the recompilation of the narrative, as a token of devotion to his memory and an ingenious way of familiarizing themselves with Maḥmūd's glory. The question is what were the literary changes of this recompilation?

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[184] "*تو از کودکی جنگ کردن گرفتی /.....* همه مردی آموختی وشجاعت / جهان گشتن و تاختن چون اسکندر", ibid., 148:2937.

[185] "*بزرگی را و شاهی را درخت بارور گردی / چو اسکندر پیروزی جهان را گرد بر گرد*", ibid., 411:8295.

[186] "*جمع کردند چنان چو به در اسکندر/ ملکاد همه علم به در خانه تو*", Ibid., 143:2829.

[187] "*در تلف کردن بد خواه و قوی کردن ملک همچو اسکندر هر روز بود در سفری*". Ibid., 379:7679.

[188] Mas'ūd continued his father's policy of using laqabs on his coinage as a means of political propaganda. See S. Amirsoleimani, 'Paper and metal: the irony that ensues. The coinage of Mas'ūd of Ghazna (421-431/1030-1040)', *Iran*, 40 (2002), 166-167.

The changes must have been quite numerous and the compiler must surely have added the lines quoted above[189]. These lines were the confirmation of the commemoration of Maḥmūd's death. Given that Maḥmūd's name is cited only once in the narrative, it is very likely that in the first compilation Maḥmūd never sought to have his name included in the narrative, perhaps as a token of his simplicity and piety. Alexander was a Quranic figure and it must have been too much for Maḥmūd to constantly compare himself with him. The similarities between Alexander's life and his own one were sufficient for the audience to associate him with the great hero. His successors felt obliged to include his name as a token of tribute to him and as a means of propagating their own power.

What is striking about the stories of the narrative is that their geographical focus is in eastern Iran and mainly in Central Asia (Russian Turkistān-Khwārazm) and the lands beyond the Oxus River. As has already been mentioned, this repertoire reflects historical developments and particularly the successful wars of Maḥmūd against the Qarakhānids in Khwārazm. After Maḥmūd's death, the Ghaznavids continued to have problems with Central Asia, this time with the Saljūqs. Thus the same narrative remained historically up to date in Muḥammad and Mas'ūd's times. There was no need to change the geographical setting of Alexander's adventures. As in the case of Maḥmūd, Muḥammad and mainly Mas'ūd were forced to face the threat from the lands beyond the river. And this carried on with all the Ghaznavids after him when they withdrew to the northwestern India. Thus, the *Iskandarnāma* must have become classical for the Iran-based dynasties (such as the Saljūqs) that faced war from the Central Asian steppes.

Lastly, the quotation of 'Unṣurī's name in the *Iskandarnāma* is also important. In the story of Alexander's visit to China 'Unṣurī is mentioned as the poet who versified the story of two lovers whose tomb Alexander visited in Firghāna.[190] This story is identified with 'Unṣurī's epic romance *Khing-but u Surkh-but* (The White Idol and the Red idol).[191] Elsewhere in the narrative it is stated that Ḥakīm 'Unṣurī has versified the well-known love story of *Shādbahr u 'Ain al-ḥayāt* (Happy of Fate and Spring of Life) which is

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[189] *IN*, 218:5-9.

[190] "و این قصه حلاوت ندارد و عنصری به نظم آورده است" (=and this story is not sweet and 'Unṣurī versified it), ibid., 289:3.

[191] T. Hägg and B. Utas, *The Virgin and her lover: Fragments of an ancient Greek novel and a Persian epic poem* (Leiden, 2003), 198.

briefly narrated in the *Iskandarnāma*.[192] ʿUnṣurīʾs name in the narrative denotes that the author of the *Iskandarnāma* was aware of ʿUnṣurī's work. It denotes also historical proximity with Mahmud's time since the poet lived in Ghazna both during and after Maḥmūd's reign. It is also possible that it could have been used in later centuries by the author or one of the scribes of the narrative as a device, the name of a famous poet. in order to give more prestige to the story of the *Iskandarnāma*. Nevertheless, the author of the *Iskandarnāma* presumably used 'Unṣurī's work. *Shādbahr u ʿAin al-ḥayāt* and *Khing-but u Surkh-but* were the two stories which formed the well known poetical collection of *Khizāna-yi Yamin al-dawla* (The Treasury of the Right Hand of the State) composed by 'Unṣurī in honour of Sulṭān Maḥmūd.[193] The quotation of 'Unṣurī's name and his famous two works along with the presence of the other sources of the eleventh century AD in the *Iskandarnāma* cannot be a coincidence and strengthens the view that the narrative was compiled in the early eleventh century in the Ghaznavid kingdom.

iii. Third stage of compilation: *Siyar al-mulūk*

A possible third stage of recompilation of the narrative is denoted by the citation of two key terms, Niẓām al-Mulkʾs well-known account *Siyar al-mulūk* (or *Siyāsatnāma*) and the name of the twelfth century scribe *ʿAbd ʾl-kāfi b. abī al-Barakāt*.[194] The *Book of Statecraft* is attested several times in the *Iskandarnāma* as a source for the compilation of the narrative.[195] That means that the compiler of the *Iskandarnāma* was aware of Niẓām al-mulkʾs account. This has two important implications for the date of the narrative and the location of its compilation: first, it is a secure *terminus ante quem* that at least one re-compilation of the narrative certainly took place in the late eleventh century, or more probably in the twelfth century or even later; second, it can be assumed that the compilation could have taken place in the Saljūq court where Niẓām al-Mulkʾs account must have been quite popular in the twelfth century. The hypothesis that the Saljūqs

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[192] "و این داستان سخت معروف و مشهورست و حکیم عنصری آن را نظم داده است و اغلاب مردم به یاد دارند" (= And this story is famous and very well-known , and Ḥakīm ʿUnṣurī versified it and most people know it by heart), *IN*, 431:2.
[193] Hägg and Utas, *op.cit.*, 203.
[194] See pp.78,115.
[195] *IN*, 240:20.

patronized the re-compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* is also strengthened by the fact that Saljūqs, such as Sanjar (1096-1157 AD). as orthodox Muslim Sulṭāns defended Islam against the invaders of the Central Asian steppe, many of whom were infidels.[196] The motif of fighting against infidels in Khwārazm and Turkistān as well as a number of personal names in the *Iskandarnāma* could also be associated with Sanjar's time or the Saljūqs in general.[197]

Nevertheless, the evidence to suggest such a theory is quite limited. The narrative could have been compiled anywhere in eastern Iran because the *Siyar al-mulūk* was popular in the whole spectrum of the eastern Iranian world long after the fall of the Saljūqs during the Mongol and Timūrid periods. The model of the *ghāzī king* was popular amongst all dynasties that followed the Ghaznavid rule in eastern Iran and in one way or another every ruler must have used this ideal model or rulership.

The second important term is that of the scribe *'Abd 'l-Kāfi b. Abī al-Barakāt*. According to the author of the *Iskandarnāma,* he copied the narrative based on a previous manuscript which had been copied by *al-Barakāt and* it was kept at a certain Jāmī' Library in a market.[198] Quite a few things are known about his identity: he lived in the twelfth century AD and he was a fine calligrapher and scribe who used the diagonal (*mutmāīl*) type of calligraphy.[199] According to Bahār, the copy of the *Iskandarnāma* at this stage took place probably before the internal strifes (*fitna*) of the Khwarāzshāhs and Mongols simply because after these events, there was no library left in Khurāsān and Iraq.[200] By mentioning the term *fitna*, Bahār must refer to the events of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries AD. The conflict between the 'Abbāsid caliph al-Nāsir bi'llāh (1180-1225 AD) and the Khwārazmshāhs Tikīsh and his successor 'Alā' al-Dīn Muḥammad (1200-1220 AD)[201] brought turbulence to north-eastern Iran and Iraq but it is uncertain whether libraries and archives suffered severe and systematic destruction, as

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[196] Tribes such as the Qïpchaq, Qanglï, Qun and Pecheneg were not fully Islamicized in Sanjar's time. See Bosworth, 'The political and dynastic history of the Iranian world', in *CHI,* 5, 141-142.
[197] Ibid., 138.
[198] "...و نصخه اصل که در دار الکتب جامع بُن بازار نهاده است". (= and the initial manuscript which was kept at Jāmī' Library at the end of the market), *IN*, 497:1-2.
[199] Regarding these biographical details Bahār does not refer to the source of his information, 2:129.
[200] Ibid.
[201] Bosworth, *op.cit.*, 181-195.

Bahār claims. His point about the Mongol destruction of libraries sounds more realistic, although there is not adequate evidence to verify it.

What is important in this analysis is that the author mentions that *al-Barakāt* had compiled the narrative after consulting an unknown number of manuscripts of the *Iskandarnāma*.[202] That means that he played a vital role in the transmission of the literary tradition of the *Iskandarnāma*. Regardless of whether the name *'Abd 'l-Kāfī b. Abī al-Barakāt* is a historical one or a *takhalluṣ* (pseudonym or conventional formula), this information reveals that in the twelfth century there were various dispersed manuscripts and versions of the *Iskandarnāma* and that there was at least one systematic effort to locate, and accumulate these manuscripts and create a new version of the *Iskandarnāma* based on these manuscripts. Hence, this quotation of the narrative proves the popular character of the narrative and it implies the extensive circulation of manuscripts of the Persian Alexander romance in Iran.

An important element of the text that needs to be analysed is that of its comic aspect. This has already been pointed out by Hanaway in his doctoral dissertation[203]. The *Iskandarnāma* consists of three elements: the epic primarily, the romantic secondarily and the comic last. These three elements in one way or another contribute to the entertainment of the audience. The analysis of the narrative shows that the epic element is the predominant feature since it forms the nucleus of the plot: Alexander campaigns against the infidels in order to spread Islam. The epic element as it is presented is certainly not comic but it is entertaining in epic terms. Given that the epic aspect is predominant, it could be assumed that it formed the backbone of the narrative. The romantic and comic features are secondary in the narrative. The romantic element is added to the epic aspect in the following pattern: the hero campaigns, and conquers (*epic aspect*). Each time one of the prizes he receives is a wife or more with some of whom he has various private adventures (*romantic aspect*). The comic element is almost entirely related to the romantic and sexual aspect of the text. The hero or his female partners are involved in several comic love adventures. The comic feature plays a vital role in the

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[202] **"عبد الکافی ابن ابی البرکات مبالغی نسخها مطالعه کرد."** (='*Abd 'l-kāfī b. abī al-Barakāt* studied the exaggerations of the manuscripts), *IN*, 497:1-2.
[203] Hanaway, 125.

plot, but it is not predominant when it is compared with the epic. Presumably, the *Iskandarnāma* must have undergone several compilations following the early eleventh century in which it was first compiled. It could be suggested that these three features did not have the same role when the narrative was initially compiled. The epic element must have been quite predominant and one could assume that the *Iskandarnāma* in its early days was an entirely prose epic account and its romantic and comic aspects were added gradually. This assumption is based on the fact that the narrative includes a wide range of ideas and literary aspects which seem to be incompatible: how can someone combine the sacred aim of *jiḥād* in the *thughūr* combined with physical love and comedy? Given the religious and war fever of the time, this seems to be incompatible in eleventh century eastern Iran. Perhaps the co-existence of a "serious" and "comic" (not ridiculous as Hanaway states)[204] aspect of a legendary hero in moments of entertainment could be a reality for every audience even during Maḥmūd's reign. However, since there are no other texts dealing extensively with comedy from this period, it is difficult to reconstruct a clear image of how comedy and entertainment were combined with ideas such as kingship and religion.

The content and style of the *Iskandarnāma* do not suggest that it was simply a "popular" and "unsophisticated" text, as Hanaway considers.[205] As has been mentioned, the audience of such a romantic epic was not restricted to uneducated people but it certainly included the middle and upper classes and the court.[206] Because of its simple style and character, Hanaway considers the *Iskandarnāma* to be a popular account. It is true that legends about Alexander were formed in the oral tradition of the masses but the compilation of a narrative based on these legends was another issue. At those times, only the royal court and the upper classes in general were able to patronize such works. Otherwise there was no possibility of compiling them elsewhere because of the fact that only a few people knew the art of the script. These people worked only for the Sulṭān or his governors or even for the powerful local aristocracy, the *dihqāns*.

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[204] Ibid., 125-126.
[205] Ibid., 126.
[206] M. Gaillard also highlights the rich content of Persian prose romances and that the term 'popular' does not reflect the type of this romances, Ṭarsūsī, *Alexandre le Grand en Iran*, 10-11.

Obviously the narrative is simple in terms of style and expression but it is not unsophisticated in terms of ideas, motifs and messages. This simple style could be read and narrated everywhere, from the bāzār, the mansion of a local *dihqān* up to the court of the Sulṭān himself. Entertainment of this kind can draw the interest of every literary and sophisticated man. When one laughs and is joyful, it does not matter whether he hears something "sophisticated" or not. In fact, the simpler the style, the content and the language are, the better for the sophisticated audience: entertainment aims to offer joy and release the audience from reality and that is what the hero does. Complicated literary devices and style certainly offer entertainment but not to the extent that a simple style transmits messages and joy. Thus, the narrative should not be considered popular and unsophisticated, since it was probably produced within the court and its audience could have been both the educated and social elite, and the illiterate masses. Hence, it should mainly be seen as a token of polite prose literature with messages and a style not confined to the audience of an educated elite.

In general, technical details such as the type and quality of paper, the ink and the style of script suggest that the current manuscript was compiled in the fourteenth or fifteenth century. However, the linguistic and historical evidence of the narrative suggest that its initial compilation took place earlier. The *Iskandarnāma* was probably compiled in at least three stages: for the first time in Maḥmūd's reign in the Ghaznavid court or in an eastern Iranian provincial centre of the Ghaznavid empire, perhaps Khurāsān (Nīshāpūr or Merv or elsewhere) or even Afghānistān (Ghazna), areas where the genre of romantic epic was developed due to the role of *dihqāns*.[207] This theory is based primarily on two elements: first, the model of the ruler (*ghāzī king*) in association with the citation of Maḥmūd's name and his comparison with Alexander; second, the repertoire of the narrative and the development of the stories mainly in Central Asia. The role of these two factors is strengthened by the existence of several historical details as well as the use of Alexander's image as an epic and sacred figure of Islam against the infidels in the literature produced at the Ghaznavid court. By associating or comparing himself with the legendary figure of Alexander the Great, Maḥmūd or one of his associates aimed to

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[207] C.E. Bosworth, 'The Development of Persian Culture under the Early Ghaznavids', *Iran*, 6 (1968), 33-41.

indirectly to propagate his (Maḥmūd's) own exploits. The compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* in the Ghaznavid court aimed to entertain and at the same time to transmit political messages about the ideal model of the ruler that Alexander embodied for Maḥmūd. The *Iskandarnāma* in its first stages of compilation must have been a prose epic or romantic epic. Whether the comic element was initially included in its first compilation must be considered uncertain due to the lack of other similar examples of the same genre of that time.

After Maḥmūd's reign, the narrative was probably recompiled (second stage of compilation), perhaps by one of his immediate successors (Mas'ūd or Muḥammad), who had every reason to propagate Maḥmūd's model of rulership. A third stage of compilation is suggested due to the use of the *Siyar al-mulūk* in the *Iskandarnāma*. Maḥmūd's model of rulership became a classic one in the Islamic world and it was emulated later by several rulers. Hence, there was every reason for the political system each time (Ghaznavids or other dynasties after them) to patronize the recompilation of the *Iskandarnāma*. The names and characters of the romance are legendary and the plot could be applied by every dynasty that lived south of the Oxus and faced the threat from the steppe. Thus, the geography and political circumstances in eastern Iran made the *Iskandarnāma* diachronic and popular during Maḥmūd's reign and especially after his death.

Chapter IV. Aspects of kingship

The fact that the *Iskandarnāma* is a popular account with a predominantly entertaining character (due to its epic and comic elements) does not mean that the narrative lacks elements of the Persian polite literary tradition and that it does not provide information about the social and political apparatus of Iran during the periods of the narrative's compilation. By contrast, as shown in the following chapters, vital information is drawn by the narrative concerning political and philosophical concepts (Time as a manifestation of Fate, Love and others). These themes form a heterogeneous body of material which is not presented in the form of an ordinary treatise or chapter. These concepts in the narrative are reflected through the actions of the heroes, mainly the protagonist Alexander. The heterogeneous material and the implicit way through which it is displayed in the narrative have to do with the literary nature of the *Iskandarnāma* and the aim of the author to entertain. Similarly, miscellaneous literary sources (popular and courtly), such as the *Shāhnāma* and the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, have been used by the author and have provided this heterogeneous material.

Kingship is a fundamental concept for the development of the narrative. The notion of the champion and righteous ruler forms the backbone of the protagonist's image. This image of monarchy must be interpreted based on the historical role and concept of monarchy in medieval Iran and pre-Safavid Persian sources, mainly those of the Saljūq era. This chapter examines the theme of kingship in the *Iskandarnāma*: first it presents the ideas which form the profile of the king and second it shows the literary association of the narrative with the polite literature of Iran, especially the epic and *andarz* traditions.[1] On the whole, it displays the importance of the *Iskandarnāma* as a source of information for the image of kingship in medieval Iran.

At the time of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* (the eleventh and twelfth centuries), the historical concept of the Iranians about kingship was formed of two components: the pre-Islamic and Islamic notions of the ruler. The brief phrase "King as

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[1] With regard to kingship in the *Iskandarnāma*, the Persian epic tradition is formed mainly by Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* (*IN*, 249:12). This Iranian epic tradition is fused with Islamic lore influenced by the *Isrā'īliyyāt* cycle of Prophets and Kings, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* (*IN*, 251:11). These two trends form the model of the Muslim-Persian hero, a model which is in accordance with the *andarz* literature (*Siyar al-mulūk* or *Siyāsatnāma*), (*IN*, 240:20).

Shadow of God upon Earth" summarizes the fusion of these two components in an Islamic environment under the Persianized Saljūq Turks.[2] This fused notion marked a development in the concept of kingship after the advent of Islam in Iran. The coexistence of the Sulṭān and the Caliph resulted in the military and political superiority of the Sulṭān and the restriction of the Caliph's role to a religious and theoretical supremacy.

i. The concept of Kingship in Iran

The pre-Islamic concept of kingship

In pre-Islamic Iran the intimate association of the king and the Zoroastrian clergy formed a political apparatus amongst the Iranians. While there is insufficient evidence about the status of the Zoroastrian religion in Achaemenid Iran, it could be suggested that the Achaemenids favoured the Zoroastrian religion.[3] Their kingship is associated with the Zoroastrian pantheon, when in the Achaemenid inscriptions Āhurā Mazdā (= *The Wise Lord*) is celebrated as creator and many sacred places are devoted to the worship of the Zoroastrian deities[4]. However, it is not known whether Zoroastrian influence played the same role as in the case of the Sasanians (from the third to the seventh centuries).

The Sasanian kings brought a shift in the Iranian royal tradition by declaring that not only was their rule legitimate but also that they had divine origin.[5] They considered religion and politics two indispensable elements of their rule.[6] The Sasanian king was the perfect man and mediator between the divine and humans; his rule was infallible. The role of the Zoroastrian clergy was prominent. The Zoroastrian priests supported the political apparatus of the Sasanians and in return Zoroastrianism enjoyed mutual support

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[2] P. Crone, *Political Thought* (Edinburgh, 2004), 153. C.-H. de.Fouchécour, Moralia, *Les Notions Morales dans la littérature persane du 3^e /9^e au 7^e/13^e siècle* (Paris, 1986), 426-428.

[3] For the scarce evidence and the different approaches to the issue, see M. Boyce, 'Achaemenid Religion', *EIr*, 1, 428.

[4] R.G. Kent, *Old Persian Grammar Texts Lexicon* (New Haven, 1953), 137.

[5] This is evident in Sasanian coinage and rock-reliefs. M.I. Mochiri, *Étude de Numismatique Iranienne* (Tehran, 1977), fig. 1394.

[6] E. Venetis, 'The Zoroastrian priests and the foreign affairs of Sasanian Iran and the later Roman Empire', *NIB*, 3 (2003), 48.

from the Sasanians.[7] The reason for this mutual coexistence of the Sasanian monarchy and Zoroastrian religion was theological and political: Zoroastrianism provided the necessary framework for the interpretation of the semi-divine character of the *Shāhānshāh* (King of Kings). Royal authority depended on divine favour and protection. The possession of the Divine Charisma (Kwarennax or *farr*) by the Sasanian monarch was a fundamental necessity in order to reign legitimately.[8] The *mūbadānmūbad* (=Archpriest) often participated in the investiture of the *shāhānshāh.*[9] The adoption of the religious symbols of several Zoroastrian deities on Sasanian coins and crowns is a clear indication of the Sasanian religious ideology.[10] In general, the priesthood was the mediator between the king and his subjects.

Thus, through the notion of Divine Charisma, the Sasanian king propagated his association with the Divine and his legitimate rule. Royal propaganda had a strong impact on the popular mind and formed the main pillar of the pre-Islamic Iranian concept of monarchy. This concept was preserved in the Iranian mind in subsequent centuries, in spite of the emergence of Islam and the incorporation of the Iranian lands into the *dār al-Islām* (*Realm of Islam*).

The Islamic concept of kingship

After the appearance of Islam, the Sasanian political system was over but their dual model of kingship and religion did not disappear.[11] Two factors played a prominent role in this development: the Zoroastrian clergy and the *dihqāns*. While after the battle of

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[7] *Idem,* 'Some Notes on the Zoroastrian Clergy's Policy and the Sasanian-Roman Struggle', *JAOS,* 12 (2003), 29.

[8] About *farr*, see R. Zaehner, *The Dawn and Twilight of Zoroastrianism* (London, 1961), 285; R.N. Frye, 'The Charisma of Kingship in Ancient Iran', *IA,* 4 (1964), 36-55; E. Yarshater, 'Iranian Common Beliefs and Worldview', in *CHI,* 3/1, 344-345; A. Soudavar, *The Aura of kings, Legitimacy and Divine Sanction in Iranian Kingship* (Costa Mesa, CA., 2003), 41-47.

[9] G. Hermann, 'The Sculptures of Bahram II', *JRAS* (1970), 165-171.

[10] For the depictions of Zoroastrian fire altars, see R. Göbl, *Sassanidische Numismatik*, (Braunschweig, 1968), tab. 1, 2; for the religious symbols on the Sasanian crowns, see D. Shepherd, '(a) Sasanian Art', in *CHI,* 3/2, 1081; M. Alinia, *The Depiction of the Sasanian monarchical ideology on the crowns of the Sasanian monarchy* (University of Ioannina, 2001). (In Greek-unpublished Doctorate), 60-68, 106; idem, 'Divine charisma: meaning and representation', *Dodone,* 32 (2003), 243-263 (in Greek); Soudavar, *op.cit.,* 48-49, 67-71.

[11] Sh. Shaked, 'From Iran to Islam: Notes on Some Themes in Transmission 1. Religion and Sovereignty are twins in Ibn al-Muqaffa''s theory of Government. 2. The Four Sages', *JSAI,* 4 (1984), 37.

Nihāvand (642 AD) the Sasanian king was *persona non-grata* to the Arabs in Iran, the Zoroastrian clergy retained their prominent role amongst Iranians in spite of the lack of any Zoroastrian Orthodoxy and the emergence of several heretical movements.[12] The Zoroastrians were listed as *People of the Book* (*aḥl al-kitāb*) and their religious system was respected by Islam. The conversion of the Iranians to Islam was gradual, partially due to the strong presence and influence of the Zoroastrian religion and clergy on the Iranian plateau.[13] Thus, the preservation of the pre-Islamic concept of monarchy amongst the Iranians was intimately associated with the clerical system of Zoroastrianism. With regard to the role of *dihqāns*, the landed aristocracy of Iran, they were prominent in preserving pre-Islamic Iranian culture.[14] From the sixth century onwards the *dihqāns* played an increasingly prominent role in the social and financial development of the Sasanian Iran. Khusraw I Anūshīrwān's (531-579 AD) vital reforms strengthened the *dihqāns*' role in the army and the collection of taxes.[15] Their important social and financial role was uninterrupted by the Arab conquest. On the contrary, the Arabs who preserved the administrative system of the Sasanians, viewed the *dihqāns* as their representatives in the rural areas, and as tax collectors and allies in their effort to stabilize the Iranian plateau.[16] Thus, the *dihqāns* had the opportunity to retain a certain level of social autonomy in the caliphate. Their autonomy resulted in the preservation of several aspects of their Iranian identity, one of which was the pre-Islamic concept of monarchy. As *mawālī* (=*clients*), along with the other classes of Iranians (like craftsmen), they opposed social inequality of the Umayyads against the Iranians; their participation in the ʿAbbāsid revolution played a leading role.[17] The example of the *dihqāns* strongly suggests that the Iranian concept of monarchy was too strong to be erased by the cataclysmic appearance of Islam. After the ʿAbbāsid revolution Iranian ideas and

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[12] S. Amoretti, 'Sects and Heresies', in *CHI*, 4, 483, 500-513.
[13] For the gradual submission of Iran to Islam, see ʿA. Zarrīnkūb, 'The Arab Conquest of Iran and Its Aftermath', in *CHI*, 4, 29-33.
[14] S.M. Stern, 'Yaʿqūb the Coppersmith and Persian National Sentiment', in *Iran and Islam, in Memory of Vladimir Minorsky*, ed. C.E. Bosworth (Edinburgh, 1971), 537; M. Zakeri, *Sāsānid Soldiers in Early Muslim Society. The Origins of ʿAyyārān and Futuwwa* (Wiesbaden, 1995), 292.
[15] Zakeri, *op.cit.*, 55-56; R. Mottahedeh, 'The ʿAbbāsid Caliphate in Iran', in *CHI*, 4, 57-89.
[16] Zarrīnkūb, *op.cit.*, 43-44.
[17] Ibid., 52-55.

tradition especially in Khurāsān played a more active role in the political arena, albeit this time in an Islamic environment.[18]

The emergence of Islam in the Middle East established the new concept of Caliphate. The Caliph was the successor to the Prophet Muhammad, the deputy of God on Earth and the Commander of the Faithful (*amīr al-mu'minīn*) of the *dār al-Islām*. He combined both political and religious supreme powers, according to the model established by the Prophet of Islam prescribed in the Sharī'a.[19] The Islamic concept of rule formed the ideological framework of the Rightly Guided Caliphs (632-661 AD) and the Umayyad and 'Abbāsid dynasties (661-750 and 750-1258 AD respectively). During the 'Abbāsid period, the traditional Islamic concept of caliphate would eventually lose its monopoly on power and kingship by the emergence of several autonomous dynasties in the Iranian lands whose ideological background was based partially on the pre-Islamic Iranian concept of monarchy. During the *Iranian Intermezzo* (the reign of local dynasties during the period from the ninth to the eleventh century, between the Arab conquest and the emergence of Turkish power in Iran) the caliphate was substituted in practice by the *amirate*. Several dynasties, such as the Ṭāhirids in Khurāsān (810-873 AD), the Ṣaffārids in Sīstān, Makrān, Khurāsān and Fārs (846-879 AD), the Būyids in 'Irāq, Jibāl, Kirmān and Fārs (middle tenth to middle eleventh century AD), the Sāmānids in Khurāsān and Transoxiana (819-1005 AD) and the Minor Caspian Dynasties[20] emerged as local political powers in the fringes of the Iranian world, questioning only *de facto* the political supremacy of the caliph in the lands they ruled.[21] *De jure,* however, they acknowledged the supremacy of the caliph and depended on his approval in order to establish their

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[18] Ibid., 38-43. Mottahedeh, *op.cit.,* 59, 74.

[19] (Pseudo-) al-Ghazzālī, *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, *Nasīḥat al-mulūk,* introduction to trans. F.R.C. Bagley (London, 1964), liii; for the concept of absolute power by one person in Islam, see Crone, *Political Thought*, 272-273, 276-278.

[20] The Bādūspānids (665-1599), Bāwandids (665-1349) and the Ziyārids claimed that their origins went back to the late Sasanian period. See Bosworth, 'The Heritage of Rulership', 15, 19. For a chronological and genealogical approach of these dynasties, see idem., *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 154-171.

[21] Each one of these dynasties favoured local feelings of independence and thus promoted Persian ethnic feeling and culture. See C.E. Bosworth, 'The Ṭāhirids and the Ṣaffārids', in *CHI,* 4, 90, 130; idem, 'The Ṭāhirids and Persian Literature', *Iran,* 7 (1969), 103-106. For the Ṭāhirids who were Arabicized Iranians, see W. Barthold, 'Ṭāhirids', *EI*^{1}, 4, 614; for the Būyids, see Cl. Cahen, 'Būwayhids', *EI*^{2}, 1, 1350-1357 and H. Busse, 'The Revival of Persian Kinghship under the Buyids', in *Islamic Civilization, 950-1150*, ed. D.S. Richards (Oxford, 1973), 47-69; for the Ṣaffārids who claimed descent from the Sāsānid king Khusraw II Parwīz (590-628), see T.W. Haig, 'Ṣaffārids', *EI*^{1}, 4, 55; the Sāmānids claimed that their origin was from the Sāsānid Bahrām VI Chūbīn (r. 590) and displayed a vivid interest in the revival of the Persian language, see V.F. Büchner, 'Sāmānids', *EI*^{1}, 4, 121-124; Frye, 'The Sāmānids', 142-147, 160.

power.[22] In order to rule the subjects in their vicinities, they had to rely on concepts and principles familiar to the latter.[23] The pre-Islamic Iranian tradition and concept of monarchy had been preserved in the remote and isolated regions of northern Iran (Daylam region–Gīlān, Ṭabaristān), Fārs (Iṣṭakhr) and eastwards (Khurāsān, Makrān, Ghūr). In order to legitimize their rule, especially in northern Iran, the Būyids claimed that their lineage went back to the Sasanian dynasty;[24] 'Aḍud al-Dawla was called *Shāhānshāh* and the holder of the Divine Charisma in the Iranian territories.[25] Thus, these dynasties revived the pre-Islamic monarchical tradition but within the ideological restrictions of Islam, such as their obedience to the Caliph and their general Islamic world-concept. Through these dynasties the pre-Islamic Iranian concepts of the king as mediator between Microcosm and Macrocosm, and as holder of the Divine charisma were re-strengthened and their influence would be predominant in the forthcoming centuries in Islamic Iran.

The emergence of the Ghaznavid Turks in Iran (eleventh-thirteenth centuries)

The Ghaznavid sultanate (977-1186 AD) was the first manifestation of Turkish independent political rule in Iran. Sebüktigīn (977-997 AD), a former ghulām-commander in the service of the Sāmānids, founded a dynasty and his son Sulṭān Maḥmūd of Ghazna expanded his sultanate by quickly, though temporarily, unifying, the greatest part of central and eastern Iran, Afghanistan and northern India.[26] When the

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[22] Cahen, 'Buwayhids', 1352.

[23] The hierarchical organization of the court, the position of *ḥājib* (=chamberlain) guarding the monarch, the introduction of a harem system, the requirement of the *taqbīl* (=prostration) on all individuals who appeared before the ruler. These practices are attested even from the late Umayyad period. See Bosworth, 'The Heritage of Rulership', 8-9.

[24] W. Madelung, 'The Assumption of the Title Shahanshah by the Buyids and the Reign of Daylam (Dawlat al-Daylam)', *JNES*, 28 (1969), 92; Busse, *op.cit.*, 56-58.

[25] The imperial title: *shāhānshāh* (=king of kings) is attested for example on a coin from Fārs (970 AD), depicting 'Aḍud al-Dawla in a style similar to the Sāsānid Emperors. There is also the Pahlavi inscription *'May the shāhānshāh's royal splendour increase'*, Bosworth, 'The Heritage of Rulership', 18-19; L. Treadwell, 'Shāhānshāh and al-Malik al-Mu'ayyad: the legitimization of power in Sāmānid and Būyid Iran', in *Culture and memory in medieval Islam. Essays in honour of Wilfred Madelung*, ed. F. Daftary and J.W. Meri (London, 2003), 327-330.

[26] Bosworth, *The New Islamic Dynasties*, 178-80; idem, *Ghaznavids*, 78-114; idem, 'Ghaznavids', *EIr*, 11, 78-79; idem, 'The Ghaznavids', in Asimov and Bosworth, 95-115.

Ghaznavids came to power over declining Sāmānid rule, they had already embraced Islam and were quickly Persianized.[27] Given that their predecessors' political system was based on the Islamic tradition and the local pre-Islamic Iranian past, it was predictable that the Ghaznavid Turks would adopt many of the pre-Islamic Iranian royal traditions along with a profile of Islamic orthodoxy.

In ideological terms, the Ghaznavid Sulṭān adhered with particular zeal to Sunni Orthodoxy, promoting the Ḥanafī School of Islamic law and persecuting heterodox Muslim sects, such as the Ismā'īlīs. The Ghaznavids sought the approval of the Caliph in order to legitimize their rule according to the Islamic tradition. In order to achieve this goal, they retained excellent relations with the Caliph by sending part of the booty collected in their raiding campaigns against the infidels and by preserving hostile relations with the caliph's enemies.[28]

Expectedly, along with the Islamic element of their ideology, the Ghaznavids adopted Iranian court customs and associated themselves with the Sasanian kings. Following the pattern of the Sāmānids, they fabricated a bogus genealogy, based on a story, according to which after the Arab invasion of Iran Yazdgird's III daughter had fled to the steppes and married a Turkish chief. The fruit of this Turco-Iranian marriage would result after six generations in Sebüktigīn's birth.[29] In the panegyric poetry of their court, Sulṭān Maḥmūd is given the titles *shāhānshāh* and *khudāvand*. The Persian court poet Farrukhī addresses him as *shāhānshāh-i 'ajām*, Manūchihrī calls him *khudāvand-i Khurāsān* and 'Unṣurī uses the term *shāhānshāh-i dunyā*.[30] Sebüktigīn, Sulṭān Maḥmūd and their successors considered the Iranian royal tradition as the best device to legitimize themselves as Muslim rulers in Iran. Thus, the Ghaznavid Turks continued the Perso-Islamic concept of monarchy that was established during the *Iranian Intermezzo* and facilitated a concept of central power in their times. Their rule though soon came to an end by a branch of the Turkic confederacy, the Saljūqs.

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[27] Idem, 'The Heritage of Rulership', 24; their Persianization is also reflected in their ceremonial clothing, see S. Amirsoleimani, 'Clothing in the early Ghaznavid courts: hierarchy and mystification', *St.Ir*, 32 (2003), 238.
[28] C.E. Bosworth, 'The early Ghaznavids', in *CHI*, 4, 183.
[29] Idem, 'The Heritage of Rulership', 24.
[30] Ibid., 26.

The Saljūqs (1040-1157)

Whilst the Ghaznavids emerged as a major political power after a period of slavery under the Sāmānids, the Saljūqs and the Qarakhānids in Transoxiana, were independent tribes coming from the Central Asian steppes.[31] Although they rapidly adopted the Islamic faith for political reasons, their identification with the Iranian past was an inevitable but slow process.[32] Given that Saljūq power was established abruptly in Iran and they had not previously been under the Perso-Islamic ruling model of the Ghaznavids, the Saljūqs, unlike the Būyids and the Ghaznavids, could not initially claim any links with the pre-Islamic Iranian past and royal tradition. Moreover, after Malikshāh's death (1092 AD), the initial Saljūq fragmentation of power was succeeded by further civil strife.[33] It was probably in the later Saljūq period that a dynastic concept of *dawla* replaced the initial concept of the individual ruler amongst the Saljūqs. It was then that historiographical accounts were produced for the Saljūq dynasty[34] The Saljūqs legitimated their rule by presenting themselves as righteous kings over the unjust and treacherous Ghaznavids.[35]

It is widely accepted in modern scholarship that during the Saljūq period, the actual political profile of the Caliphate seems to have gradually declined and the Sultanate acquired the role of the active protector of the faith. As previously shown, the decline of the caliph's actual power had already begun during the Iranian interlude. The simultaneous increase of the political power of the Sulṭāns led to the development of a new political reality in the *dār al-Islām* and the creation of two centres of power: the traditional and religious centre represented by the Caliph and, on the other hand, the secular and political centre represented by the Sulṭān. Hence, the preservation of the Muslim community was a necessity and led to the co-existence of these two pillars of power. The Caliph and the Sulṭān were realistic enough to acknowledge the benefit of

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[31] Ibid., 27; idem, *The New Islamic Dynasties,* 185-188; A. Sevim and C.E. Bosworth, 'The Seljūqs and the Khwarāzmshāhs', in Asimov and Bosworth, 145-175.
[32] About the influence of the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition on the crowns of the Saljūqs, see Z. Indirkas, 'The Survival of Central Asian and Sasanian Influences in Saljūq Crowns', *IC,* 77 (2003), 63-89.
[33] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 142.
[34] They claimed descent from Saljūq b. Luqmān, see ibid., 230-231; C. Hillenbrand, 'Some Reflections on Seljuq Historiography', in *Eastern Approaches to Byzantium*, ed. A. Eastmond (Aldershot, 2001), 74.
[35] Ibid., 232.

such a system and agreed to a *modus vivendi* characterized by a fragile mutual collaboration: the Sulṭān recognized the importance of the Sharī'a as fundamental in organizing the community. Accordingly, the Caliph acknowledged the role of the sultanate as a fundamental factor for the enforcement of the Islamic law, the establishment of order and the maintenance of discipline. Thus, with both institutions, the caliphate and the sultanate, in harmony the Islamic faith and community would flourish.[36]

With regard to the Islamic aspect of their monarchical ideology, it must be noted that the Saljūqs' rule depended on the Sharī'a. In spite of the fragmentation of the *dār al-Islām* in several amirates and states, the Saljūqs propagated the notion that the aim of their rule was to defend the Muslim community, ensuring for the Muslims a prosperous life. Right religion and justice were accepted as pillars of stability whilst dynasties not worthy of ruling are deprived of their rule by God.[37] Religion (*dīn*) and State (*dawla*) were one entity, forming the concept of one community. The obligations of the Muslims to the Sulṭān were payment of taxes and prayers for his welfare. In return, he provided them with justice and security.[38] Thus, loyalty to the Sulṭān was intimately associated with the Sulṭān's obligation to rule according to the Sharī'a.[39]

It is believed that the increasingly important role of the Sulṭān for the political and military security of the *dār al-Islām* further marginalized the Caliph. The latter's actual role was gradually being transformed into a decorative one, having only a theoretical and religious power. Hence, the Sulṭān's political importance surpassed that of the Caliph. The Sultanate became distinct from the Caliphate, marking the decline of the latter. This change is clearly reflected in al-Ghazzālī's *andarz* treatise *Nasīḥat al-mulūk* which was addressed to the Saljūq Sulṭān Sanjar.[40] The Sulṭān's ruling profile appears as *Shadow of God upon Earth*, the one who holds the divine light and the House of the Saljūqs as the divinely chosen one.[41] Al-Ghazzālī does not deal with the preservation of the religious life of the *dār al-Islām* but with the maintenance of the Sultanate which would ensure

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[36] A.K.S. Lambton, 'The Internal Structure of the Saljūq Empire', in *CHI,* 5, 207.
[37] Pseudo-Nīshāpūrī, *The History of the Seljuq Turks,* trans. K.A. Luther, ed. C.E. Bosworth (London, 2001), 38; *Fārsnāma*, 1:34; *Baḥr al-Favā'id*, 294.
[38] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk,* Bagley, xlii-xliii; Crone, *op.cit.*, 158-161.
[39] Lambton, *op.cit.*, 205.
[40] Al-Ghazzālī, *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, ed. J. Juma'ī (Tehran, 1315-1317/1936-1938), 39; *Nasīḥat al-mulūk,* Bagley, xl-xli.
[41] *Siyāsatnāma*, trans. Darke, xviii; Nīshāpūrī, *op.cit.*, 153-54; Lambton, 'Quis custodiet custodies? Some Reflections on the Persian Theory of Government', *St.Is,* 5 (1956), 125-126.

order in the Muslim community. The relationship between the Sulṭān and the Caliph is outside of his scope. According to al-Ghazzālī, there are two groups of people chosen by God: prophets and kings. The former were sent to people in order to guide them (the people) to Him while the latter's mission was to restrain them from aggression against each other. Kings were assigned the well being of His servants and they were given a high status by Him. There is a distinction between the duties of the ruler towards God and towards the people. The ruler must lead the Friday Prayers, pray and keep the fast. The practical duties of the ruler are identified with political and moral duties based on political expediency.

However, the above traditional theory of a harmonious and ideal coexistence between the caliph and the sulṭān has been questioned by Carole Hillenbrand.[42] The murder of the caliph al-Mustarshid bi'llāh allegedly by the Assassins in Adharbayjān (1135) has been also questioned and it has been suggested that it was actually the Saljūq sulṭān Mas'ūd b. Muḥammad who gave the order for the caliph's assassination.[43] According to this approach, the relations between the caliph and the sulṭān were not so cordial and ideal. The case of al-Mustarshid bi'llāh is important because he reflects the effort of the caliph to release himself from the suppressive influence of the Saljūqs.

The fact that a Saljūq sulṭān pursued and achieved the murder of the caliph clearly shows that there were periods of great antagonism between the two powers of the Muslim world. Sometimes this antagonism reached this extreme level, resulting in the assassination of the caliph. The Saljūqs were not Ghaznavids in their attitude to the caliph. Their nomadic past in combination with their sudden appearance in the caliphate resulted in the formation of an ambiguous concept of the role of the caliph by them. Thus it could be suggested that, without underestimating the degree of their Islamization and the knowledge of Islamic principles, it was mainly the political reality that dictated the ambivalent attitude of the Saljūqs towards the caliph.

Although the above theory of the nature of monarchy was certainly a nuanced development in the rule of the Muslims, the essence of this theory is reminiscent of the already mentioned pre-Islamic Iranian concept of monarchy. The notion of Divine Light

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[42] C. Hillenbrand, 'al-Mustarshid, bi'llāh, Abū Manṣūr al-Faḍl', *EI*^{2}, 7, 733-735.
[43] Ibid., 734.

corresponds to the pre-Islamic (Zoroastrian) concept of *Khwarrenax*, the so-called Divine Charisma or Divine Light. The concept that only the king who is given the Divine Charisma by God is able and legitimate to rule was a Zoroastrian idea widely in use in the Sasanian period and ensured that the king was an infallible and charismatic human. Similarly in al-Ghazzālī's mind, *farr-i izadī* comprises for the ruler a perfect appearance, wisdom, the power to comprehend everything, education, horsemanship, dexterity in using arms, manliness, the dispensing of justice to the weak and strong, friendship and magnanimity, courage, deliberation, forbearance and civility, judgment and planning in the administration of affairs.[44] The Sulṭān is a Muslim king, divinely protected, destined to lead the Muslim community in the right political and religious path. The Sulṭān needs the right religion, because religion and kingship are two brothers.[45] The coexistence of these two concepts is clear: when political order is ensured, religion flourishes and vice versa. By contrast, when political instability prevails, the religious apparatus suffers from setbacks, such as heresies, lack of right guidance and turmoil. The concept of politico-religious coexistence is probably of pre-Islamic Iranian origin and is well-attested in Ardashīr's remark about Sasanian kingship.[46]

In general, the Saljūq rule in Iran is closely associated with the fusion of Islamic and pre-Islamic principles of statecraft. In fact, it is a period of a strong revival of the Sasanian royal tradition which is combined with Islamic ideology. Along with the monarchical ideology, a series of other pre-Islamic Iranian foundations flourish: the *andarz* tradition,[47] several administrative offices and others. As a result of the *Iranian Intermezzo*, the pre-Islamic notion of kingship was also influential previously in the Ghaznavid period. It was within this era of fusion of pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions that the *Iskandarnāma* was produced and modified. The narrative draws material from

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[44] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk,* Bagley, xli.

[45] *Siyāsatnāma*, trans. Darke, xix; the classic features of a monarch holding the *farr-i izadī* are manliness, courage, good nature, justice, horsemanship, a knowledge of and ability to wield different kinds of arms, an understanding of crafts and skills, compassion and mercy towards the people, steadfastness in fulfilling vows and promises, and a liking for right (orthodox) religion and right belief, and obedience to God, performance of prayers and fasts, respect for the learned, the devout, the righteous, and the wise, be almsgiving and others.

[46] The didactic words ascribed to Ardashīr I toward his son Shāpūr I that *"the monarchy and religion are intimately connected and the one is of the other's need"*, and that *"the essential part of the monarchy is the religion that protects monarchy"* reflect clearly the mutual relationship between kingship and religion in Sasanian Iran. See Venetis, 'The Zoroastrian Priests', 49.

[47] In the case of the *Siyāsatnāma*, Niẓām al-Mulk has in mind the Sasanian ideal of ruler.

several sources and the discussion which follows aims to show that the *Iskandarnāma* contains abundant material about the monarchical ideology of the Sulṭān in the Ghaznavid and Saljūq periods. Thus, it can be used as a valuable source for the reflection of monarchical propaganda in popular entertainment.

ii. *The Iskandarnāma*

The pre-Islamic concept

In the *Iskandarnāma* Alexander personifies the ideal model of a Muslim Iranian ruler. The Islamic aspect of his model is stronger whilst the Iranian element of his identity is strongly suggested only at the beginning of the narrative.[48] Given that the Islamic model is the one which is strikingly promoted in the *Iskandarnāma,* the author does not intend to draw the attention of the reader to the pre-Islamic concept of rulership. However, the pre-Islamic Iranian heritage in the narrative is reflected through three elements: Alexander's half-Persian origin, the notion of *farr* and the association of the king with the Iranian legendary kings.

Alexander's half-Iranian identity

Alexander in the narrative[49] appears as the son of Dārāb (Darius II) and Faylaqūs' (Philip) daughter, reflecting the well-known pre-Islamic tradition in Iran about his origin.[50] This version of Alexander's origin is briefly contradictory in the narrative by the historical and less popular view that Alexander was the son of Philip.[51] The legendary tradition of the semi-Iranian king forms the 'ethnic' identity of King Alexander. This

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[48] *IN*, 3-4.
[49] Ibid.
[50] See pp.30, 51.
[51] *IN*, 243:9-11.

'ethnic' element is closely associated with the pre-Islamic Iranian royal cycle of kings, as this was compiled in the *Khwadaynāmag*, and then with the *Shāhnāma*.

Divine Effulgence (farr-i izadī)

Under the influence of the *Shāhnāma*, the promotion of the image of the semi-Iranian king about Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma* enables the author to associate Alexander with the notion of *farr*.[52] At the beginning of the narrative, Alexander appears to succeed Dārā legitimately to the throne of Iran and he enjoys the acceptance of the Iranians: *"May you enjoy your father's throne"*.[53] Although the term *'farr'* is not attested in this passage, it is strongly implied that Alexander is recognized as the legitimate heir by Dārā just before he dies.[54] This recognition is an implicit transfer of *farr* from Dārā to Alexander, since, according to pre-Islamic tradition, *farr* was given to the legitimately virtuous successor to the throne.[55]

Farr is attested in the narrative in the episode of Alexander`s visit to Ceylon.[56] Disguised as *yār Farrukhzād*, Alexander enters the palace of the king of Ceylon and manages to deceive him by entering his service. He is challenged by the king to demonstrate his bravery and military skill by stretching the bow of Isfandiyār and Bahman. By displaying manliness[57] Alexander sends a wooden arrow through four shields which are set one over the other. The wooden arrow makes a hole in the shields[58]. The author interprets this deed as a result of *Farrukhzād*`s personal physical power and Divine Charisma.[59] The royal divine light strongly expresses the pre-Islamic Iranian concept of the infallible king, his skill in using arms and his manliness. In the narrative Alexander has divine protection and royal glory, in the same way that the Sasanian kings

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[52] About *farr* or divine charisma, see p.122.
[53] *IN*, 8:20.
[54] Ibid., 10:15-16.
[55] Zaehner, *Dawn and Twilight*, 299.
[56] *IN*, 58.
[57] "قوّت و مردی و جابکی...", ibid., 60:8.
[58] Ibid., 60:10-12.
[59] "بفرّ پادشاهی و قوت خویش..", ibid., 60:6. In philosophic terms, *farr* is a kind of *bāgubaxt*, exclusively destined for kings. The term *ghuvvat* reveals another type of *bāgubaxt*, the human personal one (See the chapter on Time and Fate).

had. Through divine glory, Alexander acquires a supernatural profile which enables him to mediate between God and humans.[60] The use of the term *farr* in the *Iskandarnāma* clearly denotes a significant aspect of kingship, the preservation of Sasanian royal tradition in the literary and political tradition of the Iranians at the time of the Ghaznavids and the Saljūqs.

The cycle of legendary and historical Iranian kings

The presence of the legendary and historical cycle of Iranian kings in the *Iskandarnāma* is the second manifestation, after *farr*, of the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition of kingship. The so-called "Iranian cycle of kings" represents the legendary and historical past of the Iranians, as this past was embodied in a chain of Iranian kings, from the creation of the world up to the last years of the Sasanian dynasty.[61] This royal tradition was preserved and transmitted orally and in written lists of rulers in the pre-Islamic period. In late Sasanian times this tradition was systematically compiled into a single Pahlavi narrative, the *Khwadāynāmag* (=Book of Kings). After the advent of Islam in Iran, the now lost Pahlavi account was translated into Arabic by Ibn al-Muqaffa'.[62] The tradition of the Iranian cycle of kings remained alive after the Arab conquest and was preserved both orally and in literary form up to the tenth century. In the Sāmānid and Ghaznavid courts Firdawsī produced the New Persian versified *Khwadāynāmag* in New Persian, the *Shāhnāma*. Firdawsī's masterpiece became the source of inspiration for several scholars after him and influenced catalytically literary production in Iran. An example of the *Shāhnāma*'s direct influence is the Iranian cycle of kings in the *Iskandarnāma*.[63]

The legendary and historical Iranian cycle of kings is of significance for the theme of kingship in the *Iskandarnāma* in the sense that it associates the protagonist Alexander with the legendary royal past of *erānshahr*. During his campaign, Alexander

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[60] See p.205.
[61] See p.47.
[62] See p.53.
[63] The role of the Iranian cycle of kings in the narrative results from the *Shāhnāma* tradition. The name of the *Shāhnāma* is mentioned several times in the *Iskandarnāma* as the author's source for the compilation of the romance (*IN*, 129:17; 162:16; 191:13; 207:16; 240:20; 249:12).

appears several times visiting places associated with Iranian kings of the mythical Pīshdādiyān and Kiānyiān dynasties.[64] The main characteristic of this association is the association of the past (legendary kings) with the present (Alexander). In Kashmīr, Fūr refuses to embrace Islam, telling Alexander that his pagan religion goes back to Jamshīd.[65] In Ceylon, Alexander is associated with Ḍaḥḥāk, when the islanders tell him that only Ḍaḥḥāk managed to pass their land and, according to a prophecy, another king, *dhu'l-qarnayn*, will arrive with a numerous army.[66] Moreover, Alexander exterminates the anthropophagus bees, surpassing Ḍaḥḥāk who had managed to defeat these creatures by putting a spell upon them.[67] In the land of the Davālpāyān, Alexander feels threatened by the danger of the Turks, the descendants of Afrāsiyāb and the Turāniyān, and he decides that he should campaign against them.[68] Here Alexander appears as a pure Iranian king continuing the long tradition of animosity between the Iranians and the Turāniyān.

In an unidentified region, Alexander visits the inn built by Kay-Khusraw, *"the son of Siyāvash, the son of Kay-Qubādh, the son of Ṭahmūris, the son of Afrīdūn"*.[69] The king asks Aristotle to tell him the story of Kay-Khusraw and Siyāvash. At the end of the narration Alexander becomes tearful and he thanks the Sage for making his heart joyful.[70] In another example, near the Land of Darkness, Alexander hears about a king who is a descendant of Ḍaḥḥāk the idolater.[71] Elsewhere, in the Land of Darkness, Alexander asks Aristotle to tell him stories about Kay-Khusraw and Luhrāsb.[72] In Turkistan, Alexander hears from a 600 year old man about Kay-Khusraw's justice.[73] In Siyāvashgard, Alexander visits the tomb of Siyāvash and then he appears as a descendant of Luhrāsb, while people consider Alexander to be the son of Philip. There he fights and beheads Tūrānshāh, thus avenging the deaths of Luhrāsb and Siyāvash.[74] This point is of

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[64] Rypka, *History of Iranian Literature*, 151.
[65] *IN*, 21:10-11.
[66] Ibid., 90:20.
[67] Ibid., 91:2-5.
[68] Ibid., 98:15-17.
[69] Ibid., 201:6-8.
[70] Ibid., 201:18-19.
[71] Ibid., 201:10-11.
[72] Ibid., 207.
[73] Ibid., 228:5-6.
[74] Ibid., 243:9-11.

particular importance because Alexander appears as a pure Iranian king coming directly from the blood of legendary Iranian kings. The act of vengeance against the Turks-Turāniyān is a clear example of the use of the legendary Iranian past in the Islamic period as an ideological device justifying war against the pagan Turks. In Fairyland, an old man warns Alexander that he sets too much value on this world. Nobody can escape from the wrath of time and the glorious Iranian kings prove this claim: Jamshīd, the Arab Ḍaḥḥāk, Afrīdūn, Manūchihr, Kay-Qubādh and Kay-Khusraw.[75] The land was given to the Fairies by Afrāsiyāb, because they helped him against Kay-Khusraw.[76] In Russia, a maiden tells Alexander that she comes from the seed of Afrāsiyāb.[77] In Central Asia Shāhmalik`s son tells Alexander that his religion is that of Ḍaḥḥāk, Jamshīd and the kings of the Turks.[78]

The association of Alexander with the tradition of legendary Iranian kings in the *Iskandarnāma* is certainly not an innovation of the author. In fact, it is also attested in the *Shāhnāma* where Alexander is presented as a Graeco-Iranian king,[79] linking the house of the Kayānids and the Sasanians. Alexander`s incorporation into the Iranian cycle of kings in Firdawsī`s account is probably a reproduction of the same incorporation of the hero in the *Khwadāynāmag* in the late Sasanian period.[80] The innovation of the author in the *Iskandarnāma* is that he has harmoniously compiled several tales associating Alexander with the legendary Iranian past. This indirect contact of Alexander with Jamshīd, Kay-Khusraw and others in the narrative is different from Alexander`s role in the *Shāhnāma*, where the hero has his own independent portion of kingship. On the contrary, Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma* interacts with the spirit of past kings by visiting the place where they lived and acted. Thus, the author succeeds in associating Alexander with the legendary Iranian kings and hence, indirectly legitimizes him as a righteous Iranian ruler who, like the predecessors, holds the *farr*. This association manifests a remnant of the pre-Islamic royal Iranian tradition in the *Iskandarnāma*. Alexander embodies the model of the righteous ruler, as this model has been preserved and transmitted from pre-Islamic

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[75] Ibid., 380:7-9.
[76] Ibid., 392:21-393:2.
[77] Ibid., 415:12.
[78] Ibid., 506:17.
[79] *ShN* 7, Iskandar, v.1-1931.
[80] See p.38.

Iran. This model is successfully combined in the narrative with the Islamic concept of rulership.

The Islamic concept

The above pre-Islamic features are not predominant in forming the image of the king in the *Iskandarnāma*. This results from the fact that kingship in the narrative is primarily related to the Islamic model of rulership and predictably pre-Islamic tradition plays a secondary role. The Islamic model of rulership can be detected in the Islamic literary tradition, as is attested in the *Iskandarnāma*. This tradition is manifested, first, through the Quranic tradition of the *dhu'l-qarnayn* (=*double-horned one*) being identified with Alexander;[81] second, through the influential role of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* cycle in the narrative, as has already been analyzed;[82] and third, through the *andarz* tradition.[83]

The above Islamic written tradition and lore provide the ideological and dogmatic background of the king in the *Iskandarnāma*. This material connects in literary form the narrative with the rest of Persian tradition. Given that these have already been analyzed elsewhere in the current thesis, it is necessary to proceed to the next step of this analysis: the particular ideas about the model of the Muslim ruler as these are manifested in Alexander's behaviour in the narrative. In particular, an extensive analysis is given below about the relation between the *Iskandarnāma* and the Persian *andarz* literature, as a vital factor for the formation of the ideal ruler in the narrative.

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[81] See p.163. Here King Alexander appears as the *double-horned one* of the Quranic passage (18:82) and, hence, he embodies the image of a pure Muslim prophetic figure. The association of Alexander with an aspect of the Quranic tradition is of great importance for the formation of the model of the Muslim King in the *Iskandarnāma*.

[82] Alexander's association with several prophetic figures and holy places of the Middle Eastern Islamic-monotheistic tradition results in his inclusion in this legendary tradition of Muslim sacred personalities, and more important, in providing the necessary religious framework for the establishment of the Muslim profile of the perfect ruler. Alexander in the narrative is identified with Solomon and is associated with several prophets such as Adam, Noah, Ḥud, Ṣāliḥ and others (*IN*, 380:10-13). In other cases, this association becomes more active through the interaction of King Alexander with sacred figures, such as al-Khiḍr.

[83] See p.137.

Mirrors for Princes (*andarz* literature)

The Persian literary genre of *andarz* literature is of fundamental importance for the analysis of kingship in medieval Iran and hence the role of kingship in the *Iskandarnāma*. The *andarz* texts contain injunctions and advice to young princes and kings for appropriate behaviour mainly on statecraft, religion and everyday life. They present at length the moral ideals to which the ruler should aspire.[84] The king must know everything about his kingdom. Mirrors are usually associated with religious instruction, ethics and wisdom literature. Statecraft (*siyāsa*) is divided into three categories: ethics (of the self), economics of household management (of the household), and politics (of the masses).[85]

The Iranian counsels are the most reliable source for the model of the ideal Muslim ruler in Iran. The origin of this genre is traced back to pre-Islamic Iran.[86] After the Arab conquest of Iran, the pre-Islamic *andarz* heritage remained powerful and was transmitted to Muslims through translations from Pahlavi to Arabic.[87] The *andarz* tradition remained strong in the Iranian lands and was officially revived during the *Iranian intermezzo*.[88] In the literary activity sponsored by the Sāmānid court, the *andarz* tradition must have been preserved and was then transmitted to the Ghaznavid and Saljūq periods forming the ideal model of rulership in these periods.[89]

The importance of the Mirrors for the political life and concept of rule in Islamic Iran was catalytic influencing the rest of the Persian literary production. The *andarz* texts were produced both in verse and prose, interacting with other Persian literary genres. This chapter will demonstrate that one of the texts interacting with the Iranian counsel

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[84] Dh. Ṣafā, 'Andarz II. Andarz Literature in New Persian', *EIr*, 1, 16-17; de.Fouchécour, *Moralia*, 357-359; M.-T. Danishpazhouh, 'An Annotated Bibliography on Government and Statecraft', in *Authority and Political Culture in Shi'ism*, ed. S.-A. Arjomand (New York, 1988), 213-239.; *Baḥr al-Favā'id*, trans. into English as *The Sea of Precious Virtues* by J. Scott Meisami (Salt Lake City, 1991), xii-xvii; Crone, *op.cit.*, 161-162.

[85] Ibid., 149-150.

[86] For the *andarz* literature in its pre-Islamic context, see Sh. Shaked, 'Andarz in Pre-Islamic Persia', *EIr*, 2, 11-16.

[87] J. Derek Latha, 'Ebn al-Moqaffa'', *EIr*, 8, 39-43.

[88] The first samples of mirrors for princes are attested in verse in the ninth century AD, Lazard, *Les premiers poètes persans*, tom. I, 12.

[89] A.K.S. Lambton, "Islamic Mirrors for Princes" in *La Persia nel medioevo: Atti del Convegno internazionale*, Rome, 1970. Academia Nazionale dei Lincei, Quaderno n. 160 (Rome, 1971), 419-442; Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 16.

texts is the *Iskandarnāma*. The presentation of the hero's personal features and behaviour in the narrative interact with conventional stereotypes for the behaviour of a king in Islamic Iran. Features, such as magnanimity, generosity, righteousness, piety, bravery and prudence, form this ideal image of the perfect ruler in Iran according to the *andarz* texts (see below on each feature separately). These features are also prominent in the *Iskandarnāma* forming the backbone of King Alexander's personality. The common features between the *andarz* tradition and the *Iskandarnāma* are also evident by the use of Niẓām al-Mulk's *Siyāsatnāma*, one of the most influential *andarz* texts, which was also used as a source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*. The *Siyāsatnāma* (*Siyar al-mulūk*) is mentioned several times in the narrative denoting thus the interaction between the *andarz* tradition and the epic romance.[90]

A key observation in this relation is that the common *andarz* features are presented in a different way in the *Iskandarnāma*. On the one hand, the *andarz* texts transmit their messages in a didactic manner through the use of maxims, admonishing sentences addressed to the king or prince and comments by the author on the careers of several exemplary Sasanian kings.[91] On the other hand, the same *andarz* elements are presented in a non-didactic, linear and narrative way in the *Iskandarnāma*. In particular, the hero personifies the model of the ideal ruler simply by demonstrating the *andarz* virtues in his action in the narrative. The elements forming the perfect ruler appear as an indispensable part of the hero. Alexander is already the perfect ruler and not the ideal ruler to be. Thus, the prose romance provides the necessary literary framework and background where the materialization of the *andarz* features takes place.

The aim of this chapter is to establish a common ground between *andarz* literature and the *Iskandarnāma* about some official aspects of the model of ruler in Islamic Iran (eleventh-twelfth centuries AD). Another aim of the following lines is to show those earthly aspects of Alexander's character that form the entertaining core of the narrative and are in contrast with the *andarz* image of the perfect ruler. In order to show the proximity of the *andarz* tradition and the *Iskandarnāma*, it is necessary to analyze the narrative in association with some of those aspects of Alexander's character that embody

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[90] For example, *IN*, 240:20.
[91] Ṣafā, *op.cit.*, 17.

the result of the *andarz* stereotypes for the perfect ruler: *magnanimity-generosity, bravery, prudence, piety and justice*.

1. Alexander as an ideal ruler

Magnanimity

Magnanimity associated with mercy is another important aspect of a king who wants to promote a human profile among his subjects. This aspect is associated with the Islamic concept of kingship as this is reflected in the *andarz* literature (Mirror for Princes).[92] Alexander's magnanimity[93] is depicted in the following episodes and mainly in the story with Dārā, his half-brother.

The magnanimous attitude of Alexander towards Dārā and his family is attested in the historical sources and has been preserved in the legendary accounts.[94] In the *Iskandarnāma*, according to the general Persian version of Alexander's origin, he is the half-brother of the Achaemenid or Kayānid king Dārā. Their relationship, in spite of Dārā's ignorance, defines the behaviour of Alexander towards his half-brother. He embarks on his campaign against Iran and from the very beginning the two brothers become tragic figures; Alexander is forced to fight his brother because he has to accomplish his mission in this world. Dārā appears as the Iranian king who defends the land of his ancestors, unaware of the fact that the threat coming from the West is his own blood. The scene where the two brothers meet and Dārā is on the verge of death is well known in Persian literature and it has been preserved in the *Iskandarnāma*.[95] Alexander's magnanimity can be interpreted as the result of his awareness of their relationship. He does not want to assassinate his brother, Dārā, at any part of the narrative. On the

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[92] Magnanimity is an important aspect of kingship in Islamic Iran. *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, Bagley, xlvii; about the *andarz* literature see I. Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies* (Cambridge, 1988), 151-152.
[93] Southgate, 'Portrait', 280.
[94] See p.23.
[95] *IN*, 9:1-3.

contrary, he attempts to capture him alive in order to keep him on the throne, since Alexander's goal is not the throne of Iran but the conquest of the whole world.[96]

The first token of Alexander's magnanimity is the good treatment of Dārā`s family who fall into Alexander's hands, when Dārā, after his defeat on the battlefield, flees to Kirmān to regroup his army. The first act of Alexander is to announce to Dārā`s family that he is his half-brother, the son of Dārā. Then he magnanimously informs them that *"I will be for you as Dārā was. Feel comfortable and stay where you are in peace. Nobody will annoy you"*.[97] The chivalrous attitude of Alexander towards Dārā`s family inspires the latter's mother to write a letter to his son informing him about the magnanimous character of Alexander. Dārā is not touched by the letter and insists on defending his kingship.

After Dārāb is stabbed by his ministers Mahyār and Jānūsipār, the assassins go to Alexander so as to inform him about the "good news". Alexander asks to be led to Dārā. As soon as he enters Dārā`s tent, he displays generosity towards his brother, despite the latter's hostile behaviour. When Alexander reveals his secret to his brother, Dārā realizes the truth too late. In his last moments, Dārā accepts Alexander as his brother and recognizes his chivalry; as a token of this recognition he entrusts Alexander with the protection of his family.[98] In general, Alexander's chivalrous attitude towards Dārā and his family reveals affection, magnanimity and chivalry on his part.

Another example of Alexander's chivalrous character is that he sends the two Kashmīri wives of Dārā back to their homeland along with a huge dowry.[99] His noble behaviour is combined with generosity in the episode with the Scorpion, the Snake and the Youth where Alexander gives gold and a rich gown to the Youth.[100] Magnanimity is

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[96] The legendary story Alexnder's magnanimity to Dārā reflects the historic evidence of the sources, according to which Alexander did not pursue to kill Darius III since he wanted to appoint him king of Iran and legitimize himself as the supreme ruler of his empire. See E. Badian, `Alexander in Iran`, in *CHI,* 2, 431; A.B. Bosworth, `Alexander the Great Part I: The events of the reign`, in *CAH,* 6, 808.

[97] *" من شما را چون داراب ام هیچ دل مشغول مدارید و به آرام بجای خویش بنشینید که کس را با شما کاری نیست"*, *IN,* 9:1-2.

[98] Ibid., 10:9-11:2; Southgate, 13-14.

[99] *IN,* 11:18-19; Southgate, 14.

[100] *IN,* 214:22-215:1; Southgate, p. 61.

also displayed when he decides not to kill the cupbearer's wife in spite of the fact that he was deceived by her.[101]

Concerning magnanimity, the author of the *Qābūsnāma* is clear that men must not be punished for every misdeed.[102] Alexander follows this principle occasionally but not when it concerns crucial misdeeds of others, such as assassination attempts against him. Alexander's merciful behaviour to Dārā's family is close to the model of noble behaviour attested in the *Siyāsatnāma* (Moses and the lost sheep).[103] Al-Ghazzālī is quite revealing in his analysis of this feature of human behaviour. The story of the Sasanian king Khusraw I Anūshīrwān reflects an aspect of chivalry; he urges his cupbearer to forget the event of the precious stolen cup and let the unknown thief and his/her partner leave the palace.[104] The king's magnanimity is dictated by his realism. In caliph 'Umar's anecdote, *chivalry* and courage are the result of one's self-respect which leads to the respect of others.[105]

Bravery

Bravery is a fundamental feature of kingship in the pre-Islamic and Islamic Iran and Alexander is a revealing personification of a brave hero in the narrative.[106] Royal bravery inspired safety in the population of the kingdom and embellished catalytically the glorious image of the king. Bravery is a principle that kings are taught from their early age.[107] Alexander as king in training is obliged to learn to be brave from as early as his childhood. As an adolescent, he displays manliness in the three arts he is taught; horsemanship, polo and the art of war (a pre-Islamic model of education of Sasanian

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[101] *IN*, 617:3.
[102] Kay Kāwūs b. Iskandar, *Qābūsnāma*, ed. A.A.M. Badawī (Tehran, 1963); trans. R. Levy (London 1951), 100 (henceforth cited as *Qābūsnāma*).
[103] *Siyāsatnāma*, 104.
[104] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, Bagley, 124-125.
[105] Ibid., 118.
[106] Southgate, 'Portrait', 280.
[107] *Siyāsatnāma*, ch. 28:74-75.

Iran).[108] The development of his skills in these arts becomes a legacy in Alexander's life, a legacy that enables him to achieve his goal the conquest and rule of the world.

When Alexander embarks on his campaign, he is challenged multiple times to prove what he has learned in his youth. Bravery and manliness are two elements that co-exist in Alexander's *persona* as two sides of the same coin. The battles he gives in the *Iskandarnāma* are numerous. One of the most vivid scenes in the narrative takes place in the episode of his visit to the Fairyland.[109] Having encamped in a hostile land, Alexander and his soldiers fall asleep at night without drawing the magic circle that protects them from any hostile assault. The fairies, being aware of this detail, attack suddenly and manage to cause severe casualties in Alexander's army. Moreover, they capture alive some of the king's wives and Aristotle, the sage (*ḥakīm*).[110] Alexander's bravery and determination becomes evident as soon as he wakes up and realizes the extent of the destruction of this assault. Without delay, he mounts his horse and he orders loudly the elephant drivers to beat the drums. Then, Alexander's army counterattacks, they slay many fairies and take an equal number of captives. In other battles against the fairies, Alexander displays great courage and a brave spirit, when he urges his retreating or hesitant soldiers to fight fiercely against the fairies; thus he becomes a source of emulation for them in the battlefield.[111] Besides the fairies, Alexander's bravery is confirmed by fighting many other supernatural creatures, such as the golden bees and the Davālpāyān.[112]

If his deeds are important credentials of his bravery, the admiration and fear of his allies and enemies respectively are equally important. The nobles of Shāhmalik warn their king that "*if (Alexander) attack us with his sword, the entire army will be no match for him*".[113]

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[108] "*و به مردی و سواری و آداب میدان و گوی و چوگان بی نظیری شد و .....*", (=*...and he became skilful in manliness, horse-riding, public behaviour, in the sport of sphere and polo...*) *IN*, 5:5-7. For the obligatory skilfulness of a prince in the art of war and polo from his early years, see *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 19:52, ch. 54:64.

[109] *IN*, 354.

[110] Ibid., 356:22.

[111] Ibid., 365:5-9.

[112] Ibid., 92:7, 97:1.

[113] "*گفتند شاها اگر با شمشیر از آنجا بر آید ما و همه لشکر با وی بر نیاییم*", ibid., 613:12-13.

Arāqīt's admiration for Alexander is striking. From the time that she submits herself to Alexander's superiority and manliness, she becomes his wife and the warmest supporter. In the war against Shāhmalik's infidel Turks, Arāqīt manages to capture Shāhmalik in his tent and threatens him that *"the King of Earth knows what to do with you"*.[114] In another part of the narrative, Arāqīt proves her loyalty and admiration for Alexander by warning Yāqūtmalik about the latter's intention to fight Alexander; *"... Do not you know that you and 10,000 like you are no match for him?"*[115]

Alexander's manliness is a feature that enriches the narrative and stimulates the interest of the reader and the audience. His bravery is often combined with rationalism and prudence or even fear. When it is necessary, Alexander chooses not to display his manliness, although he is challenged to do so. Alexander's self-control results either from logic or from a sense of fear that prevails in his mind, when he faces a difficult situation. This fear is depicted as a feature of Alexander's "earthly" personality. The use by the author of Alexander's internal monologue is a device revealing an important aspect of the hero, his secret thoughts and dilemmas; these do not keep pace with the external and well-known heroic image of Alexander.

Elsewhere in the text, Alexander proves that he is a hero eager to make use of his manliness at any moment. Especially, when his bravery is doubted by his opponents, he shows no hesitation in demonstrating his manliness. Sometimes he displays excessive bravery: in the episode with the King Arslānkhān, Alexander decides to punish him by defeating him in single combat.[116] In spite of the calls of his soldiers not to fight personally, for Alexander's army is stronger, the latter ignores both the calls of his men and the numerical advantage of his army, and throws himself into the combat against Arslānkhān so as to give the latter a lesson. His aim? To prove that Arslānkhān's accusations for lack of manliness of Alexander are false.

Prudence

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[114] Ibid., 693:11; Southgate, 148.

[115] "*ندانستی که تو و دو هزار چون تو با وی بر نیایند؟*", *IN*, 762:9.

[116] Ibid., 695:9-12; Southgate, 150.

Prudence in its Islamic form is an important aspect of Alexander's character about the execution of his policy. Alexander is the most powerful king in the world who embarks on conquering it. Therefore, in many cases he must face difficult circumstances which demand quick and right decisions. In several cases, Alexander displays a mature and prudent approach to events.

His Islamic prudence about his approach to political circumstances takes several forms in the *Iskandarnāma*; the most important aspect of his prudence is the traditional Islamic practice of avoiding war until it is inevitable.[117] The aim of Alexander, as assigned by God, is to submit the *dār al-ḥarb* into *dār al-Islām*. Every time he reaches a new kingdom, he sends a message to the local king demanding for his submission. When the enemy (the king of Oman) accepts his demands, Alexander has no reason to pursue a hostile policy against the kingdom. On the contrary, he considers the submitted ruler and his kingdom to be benevolent allies. In the case of Dārā, things are different; Alexander knows in advance that Dārā is his brother, so he is influenced by their relationship and he keeps a prudent attitude towards Dārā asking him to surrender and not to fight so as to avoid the shedding of fraternal blood;.[118] Nevertheless, in spite of their relationship, Alexander thinks in a strategic way about the future of his army and his campaign. His aim is to preserve the power of his men for future warfare, especially when he must fight against the powerful army of Dārā. Obviously in this case the emotional factor coexists with the practical needs of warfare.

In Fairyland when he emerges victorious in the war against the fairies, Alexander asks from his adversary, Arāqīt, first to send her troops back and then allow herself to become his captive (while she has asked him before to take her captive without sending her troops back).[119] Alexander is prudent enough to analyze his strategic movements and make his choices. If Arāqīt becomes his captive, while her army is still encamped in the battle area, then she will be disgraced and she will be unable to prevent her army from attacking Alexander. In the land of the Turks Alexander encounters an unexpected threat; when his army is about to engage in battle against the infidel Turks of Shāhmalik and Mankūs's son, Akhṭaf, a young infidel Turk horseman comes forth and challenges

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[117] For the concept of Jiḥad, see Crone, *op.cit.*, 362-364, 368-369.
[118] *IN*, 7:7-8:6.
[119] Ibid., 401:10-14.

Alexander's army. Alexander's heart becomes full of dread, when he sees seventy men of his army to be slain successively by the infidel brave horseman. At this point of the narrative the author uses an ingenious literary device, Alexander's internal monologue.

Alexander's resourcefulness and prudence result from his intelligence which in the Islamic context is considered as a gift of God to mankind. Al-Ghazzālī's game of words and meanings with the Arabic word *'aql* (derived from the word *ma'qil*, a remote and unreachable point at the top of a hill) reveals the magnitude of intelligence for mankind.[120] Prudence or wisdom is the *"king's prime minister"*.[121] This wisdom can be strengthened in several ways, basically with consultations with experienced and knowledgeable men.[122] Through internal monologue, the reader is able to enter his mind and explore some of the unknown aspects of Alexander's character:

> *"The army will be defeated by this fear, and if the army is defeated for this reason, then I will be disgraced. First of all, this is a difficult place and the edges (limits) of the world. Second, they will say, that all those were accomplished by the fairies and now that Arāqīt is captured, he is defeated'. However, I hope to be victorious and to conquer, for God promised me victory"*[123]

What is revealed by the hero's internal monologue is his rational approach of reality; he is able to interpret the facts and estimate the results and reflections of his actions. Foreseeing events as a result of his experience is an important form of prudence, an aspect which is not attested elsewhere in the narrative. Prudence is a vital aspect of Alexander's behaviour about his political and military affairs.

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[120] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, Ch. 6:149.

[121] "**وزیر الوزرا ء خردست**", *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 42:130.

[122] *Siyāsatnāma*, ch. 18:65.

[123] " ***این لشکر بدین ترس شکسته شود و اگر از ین بار این لشکر شکسته شود همه نموس من برود. یکی آن که این جایگاهی دشوار ست و کناره جهانست و یکی آن که گویند آن همه پریان می کردند و امروز که اراقیت در بندست او شکسته شد ولیکن امید به فتح و ظفر دارم از قول خداوند عزّ و جل که مارا عده فتح کرده است.***",
IN, 568:5-9; Southgate, 126-127.

Piety

Another important feature of an ideal Muslim king is piety.[124] Alexander is a ruler aware of his skills and power, of what he can achieve easily or with difficulty. His power is limited and he knows that without divine help he cannot explore and conquer the world so as to reach his ultimate goals, the spread of Islam for the humanity and immortality for himself.[125] Hence, it is the Divine that supports his ambitious effort. Alexander, as a medium between Macrocosm and Microcosm, is called to justify his role; piety towards God and prudence towards his subjects are inseparable aspects of his role on earth. The *Iskandarnāma* provides abundant examples of Alexander's piety in order to verify the above concept and moreover to point out his Muslim *persona*.

When his soldiers complain to him, that they cannot fight against the elephants of King Fūr, Alexander tells them *"Do not be afraid because God is on our side"*.[126] After their visit to Ceylon and the Tomb of Adam, they sail in the open Ocean for days without seeing any shore.[127] His soldiers show signs of cowardice and then Alexander advises them that even he himself must turn to God.[128] In the episode against the hostile gold bees, he is advised to imitate the example of Ḍaḥḥāk who through sorcery managed to cast a spell upon the sea so as to look like land. However, Alexander's answer is *"We do not know of sorcery; what we do is accomplished in the name of God and our strength"*.[129] According to the Islam, sorcery is considered a sin.[130] Later on, he expresses his gratitude to God by admitting that He has given him all that he ever desired.[131] In various cases, such as the number of his enemies, the hero acknowledges God's omniscience and his inner fears before a battle.[132] Moreover, his piety is mixed with his

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[124] *Baḥr al-Favā'id*, 55-63.
[125] *IN*, 206.
[126] "*خدای عزّ و جل یارماست، مترسید*", ibid., 18:18-19.
[127] Ibid., 87:18.
[128] Ibid., 88:5-6.
[129] "*ما جادوی نتوانیم کرد. ما آنچه کنیم بنام خدای عزّ و جل کنیم* ", ibid., 93:1-2.
[130] Elsewhere in the text, Alexander expresses his disgust about sorcery by threatening the sorcerers with divine wrath. Ibid., 374:20-375:1.
[131] Ibid., 93:9-10.
[132] "*عدد ایشان را خدا وند عز و جل داند* ", *[=God (only) knows their number]*, ibid., 96:6.

anxiety about whether he will be able to find the Water of Life before the end of his life.[133]

Alexander's piety also reveals self-knowledge. In particular. Alexander is aware of his imperfect nature and, when he enters the holy shrine of Ka'ba in Mecca, weeping and imploring, he asks God to forgive his sins.[134]

Alexander's main worry is the short time of his life. Therefore, he asks his mother in a letter to pray to God to bestow him with more years[135] in order to achieve his ultimate goal, immortality. At the sight of a marvel, the king admires the greatness of God. In particular, when he sees the marvel with the Scorpio, the Snake and the Youth, he utters "who else could do that but for the Glorious *God? And to him I owe many thanks"*.[136] The same expression (*Praised be God*) is used by Alexander in order to show his admiration for the vastness of the Caspian Sea.[137] God is the ultimate refuge to whom Alexander can turn to ask for protection in difficult circumstances; in the episode with the fairies he looks to God for guidance on how to find a solution and cope with the fierce fairies.[138]

According to the Islamic tradition, the hero's pillar of piety is prayers. In many cases he performs his prayers in the Islamic way;[139] by ablution, prostration and imploration towards God.[140] Besides the formal way of praying, piety in the case of Alexander is closely associated with gratitude to God. Both of these meanings, piety and gratitude, are often expressed through prayers. Several times Alexander addresses God expressing his gratitude and praise to Him concerning the secrets of the world, the protection and benevolence that he enjoys from God. Also, he praises the Divine for more earthly and daily needs: for the beautiful maiden he marries in Turkistān,[141] for protecting and helping Arāqīt to serve him in difficult moments of his life and campaign.[142]

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[133] Ibid., 98:6-8.
[134] Ibid., 101:19-102:2.
[135] Ibid., 108:5-6.
[136] "*چه کس تواند بود که خدای عزّ و جل را با او این عدایت است*", ibid., 214:12.
[137] Ibid., 217:10. In another case he kneels with his forehead to the ground thanking God for helping him to kill the sorcerers. See ibid., 376:9.
[138] Ibid., 356:8.
[139] Ibid., 543:7-9. The same model for prayers is given in the *Siyāsatnāma*, ch. 1:6.
[140] *IN*, 362:11-13.
[141] Ibid., 417:9-10.
[142] Ibid., 573:5-9.

He also expresses his piety by pointing out the omniscience and power of God over mankind. In the same sense. he acknowledges his own mortal and imperfect nature. His human nature is revealed, when he asks God to forgive his mistakes.[143] His human nature makes Alexander feel helpless in front of the unknown future. His only hope is God who according to Alexander is the One who gives hope for the future because *"He knows best and knows all the mysteries"*.[144]

In one way or another, the hero expresses his gratitude towards the superiority of the Divine and reveals his piety, an important aspect of a Muslim ruler.[145] Piety could be interpreted as the response of the divinely protected king to the privilege he has been bestowed with by God to govern.[146] In the *Qābūsnāma*, piety is the central aspect of a ruler and is primarily expressed through alms and the pilgrimage to Mecca.[147]

Justice

One of Alexander's virtues is his righteous character. Justice is of fundamental importance for a ruler in the *andarz* tradition.[148] When he is challenged to take significant decisions about several issues, his main objective is to judge rightly. These cases involve captives, the distribution of wealth coming from conquests, the suppression of heresy and others. Many examples can be drawn from the narrative about the king`s righteous profile.[149]

In the introduction of the *Iskandarnāma*, the author gives in brief the basic aspects of Alexander's righteousness. Alexander conquered the world through justice, he suppressed heresy ended all the causes of injustice. Moreover, humankind was benefited from his justice and equity which brought peace to the world.[150] This introduction is a

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[143] *"Oh Righteous God, I did wrong. Be merciful and generous, and forgive my transgression"*. ibid., 631:9-10; Southgate, 140.

[144] *"خدا علیمتر که او دانای اسرارست"*, ibid., 702:3.

[145] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, 61.

[146] *Siyāsatnāma*, ch. 1:5; *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, Bagley, xxxviii.

[147] *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 4:12.

[148] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, 57-58; *Baḥr al-Favā'id*, 296-298; de Fouchécour, *op.cit.*, 360-361.

[149] Southgate, 'Portrait', 280.

[150] *IN*, 5:15-17; Southgate, 10.

successfully comprehensive one and provides a good framework for the interpretation of the righteous character of the hero later on in the narrative.

Alexander appreciates the truthfulness of the king of ʿUmān.[151] When the hero approaches ʿUmān, the local king is scared by Alexander's glorious fame, that of the invincible conqueror, and he considers that he has no chance to resist against the latter. Instead he offers his submission to Alexander and offers him hospitality in his palace. King Fūr of India sends a letter to the king of ʿUmān urging him to fight Alexander; otherwise Alexander will deprive both of them of their kingship. The king of ʿUmān, however, due to his fear for the repercussions of Alexander's anger rather than to his truthfulness decides to reveal the content of the letter to Alexander who appreciates the truthfulness of the king of ʿUmān and treats him generously. Alexander appears realistic about justice and the way it must be awarded. He is favourable to those kings who accept his rule (the king of ʿUmān) and punishes those who oppose him (Fūr). Apart from kings, he displays the same virtue towards common people by expressing appreciation to those who helped him in the past, like the slave girl in the Fairyland.[152]

The righteousness of Alexander is manifest in many other cases. When he arrives in Yemen, he sends a letter to his mother and orders that of the gold and the riches he has sent them, 100,000 dīnārs should be distributed amongst the poor and the needy every month.[153] During his expedition in the land of the Turks, he manages to capture Buqrāquz, Shāhmalik's son. He forgives him because of his truthfulness and his sincerely kind behaviour towards Alexander when the latter captured him.[154] Alexander's just character is reflected also in the case of Ṭīnūsh, Qaydhāfa's (Candake) son.[155] In the above cases Alexander combines justice with mercy. However, this is not always the case. When he enters the heartland of the pagan Turks, he encounters their brave resistance. He eventually succeeds in defeating the idolaters and finally brings justice to the land of Arslānkhān.[156] He brings justice and Islam, the only righteous religio-political system. Alexander is a Muslim and his judgment is based on Islamic principles.

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[151] *IN*, 14:22-15:1.
[152] Ibid., 370.
[153] Ibid., 107:19-20.
[154] Ibid., 509:7-11.
[155] Ibid., 195.
[156] Ibid., 747:11-18.

Therefore, the future of the idolaters is based on Islamic law. If they accept the Islamic faith they will survive and enjoy all the privileges of the Islamic society. If they do not, then they will pay the ultimate price. This principle becomes quite obvious in the case of the submission of Yāqūtmalik's kingdom to Alexander's Muslim army.[157] When Yāqūtmalik is forced to flee, Alexander frees all his comrades who have been imprisoned by the infidels. The destiny of the infidels, however, is different. He orders to have them beheaded, their bodies being suspended from the gates of the city and their houses were plundered. Thus, Alexander brings and establishes Islam in the land of the infidels.[158] This is in accordance with his primary goal, the *Pax Islamica*, the establishment of peace upon earth, as mentioned in the beginning of the romance.[159]

Obviously, Alexander reflects the model of the Muslim ruler who is expected to establish justice according to the Islamic principles. Justice reflects the balance that the Divine has given to the Earth and those men who support this balance will be rewarded by God.[160] The best way for someone to be pragmatic (and thus bestow justice) is by seeing himself in the mirror of other men.[161] It is a necessity for a king to give justice and listen to the words of his subjects twice a week.[162] In the *Iskandarnāma*, the choices of the infidels are two; either to become converted to Islam or face death. Alexander is a righteous Muslim king and conqueror who makes use of the basic principles of Islam.[163] Not only is he the model of the Islamic ruler generally, but he also embodies the concept of justice as a distinctive feature of the monarchical ideology in the eleventh-twelfth centuries Iran. The above image of a righteous ruler could be associated with the *andarz* tradition which promotes the same profile. But, in technical terms, how is the *andarz* tradition applied in the narrative?

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[157] Ibid., 750.

[158] "و عادلی در میان ایشان بنهاد..", (=*...and established justice amongst his subjects*), ibid., 770:2-3.

[159] "بر تخت مملکت بنشست و جهان را بداد و عادل بگشاد.." (= he ascended the throne, and ruled the world and favoured justice), ibid., 5:15-16.

[160] *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*, 58.

[161] *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 19: 48, 53.

[162] "و انصاف بدهد و سخن رعیت بشنود..", (= *he must be righteous and listen to his subjects*), *Siyāsatnāma*, ch. 3:9.

[163] Crone, *op.cit.*, 369-372.

The *andarz* elements in the *Iskandarnāma* are presented in a totally different fashion from those in the *andarz* treatises.[164] Here there are no admonitions at all because Alexander appears as the perfect ruler who personifies all the *andarz* admonitions. The author has consulted the *Siyāsatnāma* and it could be supported that he has incorporated *andarz* material indirectly in the narrative. The author being aware of the demands of a prose epic romance has been influenced by the *andarz* tradition about the formation of Alexander's image. He integrated harmoniously all the features of the ideal ruler making them an indispensable part of the narration. For example, in the beginning of the narrative it is stated that Alexander was taught horsemanship, the bow and polo.[165] At first glance, this information about Alexander's education appears as a simple part of the narration. Moreover, these details are not surprising because horsemanship and the related arts formed an indispensable part of a ruler's education in medieval Iran. This information though is also a *topos* in the *andarz* treatises. Moreover, the above aspects of Alexander's character (justice, piety and so on) in the narrative have probably been inspired by the *andarz* tradition. It is very likely that the *andarz* prescriptions for the education, behaviour and action of the ruler form the model for Alexander's profile. What is impossible, however, is to define what parts of the narrative are directly associated with the *andarz* tradition. Such knowledge presupposes precise knowledge of the author's sources, identity and technique, things that are unavailable in the case of a semi-popular account such as the *Iskandarnāma*.

2. Alexander's earthly profile

If the above lines clearly revealed those *andarz* features that contribute to the ideal model of Alexander as ruler, the analysis below aims to reflect the other, more

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[164] The *andarz* accounts deal with the transmission of their message, right rulership, in a fairly static way: through anecdotes, maxims, discourses and admonitions arranged in a linear scheme many times without a rational sequence. Ṣafā, *op.cit.*, 16-17; Crone, *Political Thought*, 150. The case of the *Siyāsatnāma* is exemplary: in the first part of the account the author devotes the twenty ninth chapter to 'rules and arrangements for drinking parties' (I:29,86), the thirty first chapter to 'preparing arms and equipment for wars and expeditions' (I:31, 88) and the thirty fifth chapter to the arrangements for setting a good table' (I:35,90).

[165] *IN*, 5:5.

human and imperfect, aspects of Alexander's personality in the *Iskandarnāma*.[166] This human dimension is usually in contrast to the stereotype of the perfect ruler and forms a substantial core of comic circumstances, promoting the entertaining character of the *Iskandarnāma*. Moreover, this imperfect dimension brings the ruler closer to the standards of common people. However, this development does not ruin the image of Alexander as an ideal king. On the contrary, the 'ideal king' and the 'human king' are successfully interwoven in the narrative, forming the model of the ideal comic ruler: a king who pursues the highest values for humanity (immortality, ethical advancement and claims to the acquisition of the Truth) and simultaneously remains close to the daily needs and behaviour of his subjects throughout his quest for the highest values.

Fear

Fear is the reason for the occasional lack of manliness in Alexander. Fear makes him have second thoughts concerning the decisions he has made and reservations about those that he is going to make. After he enters the Fairyland, Alexander realizes the magnitude of the bravery of the fairies; the subsequent losses on the battlefield make him regret invading the land of Arāqīt. He recognizes that he made a mistake in claiming the Fairyland.[167] His fear dominates his mind, when he wakes up in the garden of Arāqīt's captivity.[168] Elsewhere, he regrets his mistake in killing a pregnant woman (without knowing that she was pregnant). Terror about his future overcomes Alexander, when the angel warns him that he will be punished for his sinful act.[169] His fear concerning the future punishment is so overwhelming that he weeps for his mistake.[170] Elsewhere, he is terrified, when a dream prophesies his eventual fall.[171] Again, the moments of extreme

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[166] The same aspects of Alexander's weak character are attested in the *Dārābnāma*, Ṭarsūsī, *Alexandre le Grand en Iran*, 37-42.

[167] "**بدکاری که من کردم. از اینها می باید گذشتن و هیچ نگفتن. لاجرام این درد سر بر خود خریدم. ندانم که سرانجام چون باشد؟**", (=*It was a mistake of mine. I should have passed this land (of fairies) without claims. I brought this down upon myself. I cannot say what will eventually happen), IN*, 358:4-6.

[168] Ibid., 361:14-16.

[169] Ibid., 616:7.

[170] Ibid., 616:21-617:1.

[171] Ibid., 410:6-7.

fear for Alexander emphasize his imperfect human nature and his constant worry about his bleak future and death as a result of the divine anger.

Weakness

Alexander represents the model of a great champion, the brave hero who is ready to challenge the infidels or apostates of Islam. He is the leader who unflinchingly leads his army into dangerous battles shouting the *takbīr*. In spite of this prevalent image of Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma*, there are moments, as has been mentioned above, when he is captured by fear. Although Alexander is unbeatable physically and mentally, in some cases he is trapped by the sequence of events; for example when other persons in the narrative display equal levels of cleverness. There are times that Alexander cannot go against *'destiny'*. Things seem to follow their own route and Alexander is forced to follow the path that an 'invisible hand' draws. This 'hand' is sometimes his own self with the particular characteristics of his behaviour. In these cases of weakness, he looks as vulnerable as a common man.

Paradigms abound. When Alexander, disguised as a messenger, goes to al-Andalus, he finds himself essentially in captivity. Once he realizes that Queen Qaydhāfa is aware of his true identity, fear invades him. Due to his nervousness, he acts like a wild animal in a cage. He has the courage to control himself and suppress his fears. Nevertheless, his esoteric discussion reveals the extent of insecurity in which Alexander lives.[172] The same fear appears when he is captured by Arāqīt,[173] when he is kidnapped by her and a witch[174] and later when he is captured by Arslānkhān.[175] In the story of the Water of Life, he depends completely on Khiḍr's prophetic knowledge in order to achieve his goal.[176] In another incident, he doubts the loyalty of his wife Arāqīt, when he wonders if she has a relationship with Ṭafqāj or not.[177] In this case, the model of

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[172] "اسکندر از تشویش آن زن در ماند...", (=*Alexander was afraid of this woman*), ibid., 194:11-12.
[173] Ibid., 361:14-16.
[174] Ibid., 386:7.
[175] Ibid., 735:15-17.
[176] Ibid., 206:16.
[177] Ibid., 587:15.

Alexander-Casanova[178] is shadowed by his emotional weakness. resulting from his jealous nature and his human ignorance about the developments taking place in the life of his wife. In fact, he feels disgraced only in the thought that he might have been deceived by Arāqīt.

One of the remedies that Alexander employs to overcome his frustration in several cases is resourcefulness: he finds the appropriate plan to escape, like Arslānkhān or to mislead in his discussions with the 'Other', like Qaydhāfa. Another remedy is God. Aware of the fact that he is divinely protected, he prays and asks God to intervene and grant him the victory in battle.[179] He turns to God, when he faces the dreadful fairies[180], who take him by surprise: due to their magic power they transform themselves into various personalities.[181]

When Alexander is vulnerable, he temporarily loses the role of protagonist in the narrative and shares this role with the person whom he interacts with. The interest of the reader is taken in part from Alexander's personality and is transferred to the other side of the action. Alexander's weakness becomes evident through his inability to control his destiny and his need to rely upon the knowledge of others (God, Khiḍr and so on).

Helplessness in the face of death

Along with his fear of divine anger, Alexander reaches great depths of depression over the issue of his impending death.[182] Death is a ghost on his heels, pursuing and haunting Alexander. This juxtaposes immortality as the personal goal for Alexander. Immortality and the spread of Islam are the two aims which mobilize Alexander in his campaign. Alexander lives under constant pressure as long as he knows that his life is short unless he finds the Water of Life.

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[178] See p.215.
[179] *IN*, 374:20-375:1.
[180] Ibid., 356:13.
[181] Ibid., 767:15.
[182] Southgate, 'Portrait', 281.

He feels depressed, when he is not sure whether he can find the Water of Life.[183] When he eventually fails, he is downcast.[184] Depression also characterizes his reaction, when he realizes that Arāqīt has disappeared.[185] It is depression that sometimes forces Alexander to ask for the narration of a happy story, as in the case of the chief of Egypt.[186]

With regard to death, Alexander is anxious about the exact time of his remaining life. Hence, he asks the Chinese astrologers about this issue. He receives the vague and philosophic answer that death and the time that this occurs remains a mystery.[187] Alexander's anxiety is so strong that he calculates the remaining time in months (seventy months) and not in years, a tragic and comic element simultaneously.[188] He lives in constant fear that death will take him by surprise[189] and tries to be informed about God's plan for life by asking the angel.[190] Alexander's internal world is overtaken by fear about his forthcoming death. His thoughts are laconically expressed in one phrase: "*Things would be more hopeful if I lived to my old age; then everything in my heart would be nice*".[191]

Cupidity

Cupidity is one of the elements urging Alexander to the conquest of the world.[192] This must not be considered as a primary motive but as a later development in his character. His aim is to spread Islam for the sake of mankind and acquire immortality for himself. Nevertheless, his human nature characterizes all his actions. The gradual conquest of the regions one by one leads to the gradual growth of his greed. Then a divine voice reproaches him: "*O, Alexander! Are not you satisfied with this world? You*

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[183] *IN*, 206:10-11.
[184] Ibid., 210:7-8.
[185] Ibid., 691:16.
[186] Ibid., 198:15.
[187] Ibid., 288:3-4.
[188] Ibid., 470:21-471:1.
[189] Ibid., 702:4-5.
[190] Ibid., 740:15.
[191] "***و چه بودی اگر مارا امید بودی که عمر من به پیری خواهد کشیدن که هر چه بودی بر دل خویش بودی***", ibid., 470:15-16.
[192] Southgate, *op.cit.*, 281.

have submitted the whole world; .... What more do you want?"[193] Greed reflects the other (negative) side of the same coin (success and conquest) for Alexander. The other side of the coin is the desire for the spread of Islam.

Avarice

Closely associated with his cupidity is Alexander's avarice.[194] According to a legend derived from the narrative, after the conquest of Fūr's kingdom, Alexander takes as much wealth as he can and leaves the rest behind. What is important in this legend is that he always takes two men with him in order to hide his treasures. When they have buried the treasure, Alexander kills them so as to keep the place of the hidden treasure secret.[195]

Besides its comic element in Alexander's character, avarice is not considered a positive element for a king. According to the written admonition to kings, a ruler should always be lavish with money. If he cannot follow this rule, then he should restrict avarice in his private life; avarice must be avoided, at least in public places.[196]

The use of the *Siyāsatnāma* as a source for the compilation of the narrative reflects the importance of the *andarz* tradition in an entertaining account, such as the *Iskandarnāma*. Thus, several features of Alexander's personality coming from the *Book of Alexander* are comparable to the general prescribed models of behaviour drawn from the *andarz* accounts. Alexander is an ideal ruler with a twofold profile; one related to his official duties towards Islam, according to Islamic principles, like piety, justice and others. This Muslim aspect coexists harmonically with the pre-Islamic heritage of advice texts for the ideal ruler and this is revealed by the acquisition of the traditional skilfulness in warfare (bow, horsemanship) and entertainment (polo).

What is important about the ideal image of the Muslim ruler is that the *Iskandarnāma* is in full accordance with the Persian *andarz* tradition. The fact that the

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[193] "... ای اسکندر از این جهان سیر نمی شی؟ همه جهان بگرفتی دیگر چه می خواهی؟", *IN*, 748:11-14.
[194] Southgate, *op.cit.*
[195] *IN*, 22:20-23:1.
[196] *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 42:136.

Siyar al-mulūk (*Siyāsatnāma*) account is repeatedly mentioned in the *Iskandarnāma*[197] proves that the author of the narrative was fully aware of the *andarz* literature in Iran and, thus, it is plausible to claim a strong and direct influence of the *andarz* literature upon the *Book of Alexander*.

The narrative is the compilation of several legendary traditions about Alexander's personality in Islamic Iran. Moreover, just like the legends on Alexander, the ideal credentials of a perfect ruler existed in the Iranian world long before the emergence of Islam. After the seventh century, the pre-Islamic Persian *andarz* literature expectedly dominated the Islamic statecraft. Thus, the various principles for an appropriate ruler became a *topos* in the Islamic society and they were known to the public. The ideas related to a just, brave, magnanimous leader were fully shared among the subjects of the various rulers in Islamic Iran and it must be assumed that these ideas infiltrated both written and oral traditions about rulers. Thus, oral didactic stories of the perfect model of kingship must have coexisted and overlapped with the written tradition.

As shown above, the *Iskandarnāma* shares the basic principles for kingship with the *andarz* literature by using Alexander's personality as a device for the promotion of the righteous king. Both *Iskandarnāma* and *andarz* tradition draw their material from the past and the on-going transformation of the king's profile. The *Iskandarnāma* and the *andarz* accounts share common values and principles about the image of ruler. The former must be seen as a useful paradigm, reflecting a more semi-popular concept for the image of the king. The latter (*andarz*) can be characterized as "polite" tradition dealing with the same issue. Both, semi-popular (*Iskandarnāma*) or court (*andarz*) literature give two different viewpoints of the same object (ideal kingship). Thus, the *Iskandarnāma* must be considered as a valuable and vivid source of semi-popular *andarz* literature aiming to entertain. Hence, it can be consulted along with the serious and more systematic court *andarz* literature.

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[197] *IN*, 240:21.

General remarks

In general, the above analysis intended to unfold several aspects of kingship, as they are embodied by Alexander in the narrative. This analysis is based upon the primary combination of pre-Islamic and Islamic tradition about kingship. Each one of these traditions consists of several elements which in spite of their diversion, form an effective result, that of the king as mediator between God and Mankind, Macrocosm and Microcosm. Alexander is the Persian Muslim king (*Shāhānshān-i dhu'l-qarnayn*)[198] who legitimizes his rule over the Muslim community (*dār al-Islām*) by conducting *jiḥād* against the unbelievers (*dār al-ḥarb*). He is a Graeco-Persian king belonging to the Iranian cycle of kings, holds the divine effulgence (*farr-i izadī*) and has the background of the pre-Islamic model of ruler. He is a *ghāzī king* who simultaneously becomes a kind of *prophet king* by receiving the divine help and intervention through the mediatory role of angels. Alexander is blessed[199] and he enjoys God's protection.[200] He has divine insight since he can see wonders that common humans cannot; however, even though he is gifted, he remains imperfect.[201] Alexander's behaviour in the narrative is catalytically influenced by the *andarz* literature and the *Siyāsatnāma* in particular. Alexander personifies the model of the ideal ruler with regard to his ethical and practical habits. He is pious enough to thank God for protecting him[202] and he is so brave that his foes are afraid of him.[203] For the most important thing for a king is to preserve a good name for posterity.[204]

Concerning Alexander's personality the main feature is the dichotomy of his character. He has two natures, one ideal and the other pragmatic. The ideal aspect of his personality reflects the model of ruler, according to the theoretical prescriptions of the Islamic statecraft as these are reflected in the *andarz* literature of the eleventh and twelfth

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[198] Ibid., 109:4.
[199] Ibid., 568:14.
[200] Ibid., 567:15.
[201] For example, he can see Khiḍr galloping along with Elias towards his fort, when the others cannot. In another case, however, he cannot recognize the disguised Khiḍr, although the latter helped him in the past and they passed much time together (ibid., 544:5-6).
[202] Ibid., 573:5-6.
[203] Ibid., 588:4; 613:12-13.
[204] "بجز نام نیک یادگار پادشاهان را نشاید", *(=without the power of memory there can be no monarchy)* ibid., 7:14.

centuries in Iran. Alexander is fully aware of the basic characteristics of a perfect ruler: justice, honesty, bravery, magnanimity and so on. Actually, these features form a part of the nucleus of Alexander`s character. It is the same nucleus that forms the narrative and drives Alexander to strive after the accomplishment of his goals; the spread of Islam for the benefit of the society and the acquisition of immortality for himself.

The ideal aspect of Alexander's character, however, coexists with another aspect which is more earthly, more human, less prescribed and expectable, less sinless destined to entertain. It is the human nucleus of his comic personality that urges Alexander to the indulgence of earthly pleasures (women, riches) and the emotional approach of reality with all the consequences (anger brings violence, lack of self-restraint about suffering around Alexander).

It is the human part of Alexander`s personality that makes the hero popular to the audiences of that time. Comic circumstances arise from his human image and enable the audience and the reader to identify himself with the hero. Alexander is basically the charismatic hero who is divinely protected and guided. He is successful in carrying out his duties towards God and mankind, the spread of Islam which means the gate to the absolute knowledge (God). This hero acts in accordance with the demands of the *andarz* literature, at least in its basic principles. Simultaneously he has his own human idiosyncrasy, reflecting a complex character in legendary dimensions. Due to his two dimensions (spiritual, earthly) Alexander is capable of moving with great ease between two Cosmos, the Macrocosm and Microcosm. The former takes him to Heaven assigning him with the superhuman task of the protection and salvation of mankind; the latter brings him down to earth reminding him of his earthly roots and human dimensions. Alexander has the tendency to approach King Jamshīd's hubris and downfall but this never happens simply because God prevents him from acquiring immortality. Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma* is not the Perfect Man but he flirts with the idea of becoming so.[205]

It could be suggested that the model of kingship that Alexander embodies in the *Iskandarnāma* is close to the model of rulership in Islamic lands in the eleventh-

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[205] About the concept of *Perfect Man*, see G. Von Grunebaum, 'The Hero in Medieval Arabic Prose' in *Concepts of the Hero in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance*, ed. N. T. Burns and Christopher Regan, (Albany, 1975), 99-100.

thirteenth centuries, as this model is depicted in Ghazzālī's treatise *Nasīḥat al-mulūk*.[206] Alexander is an amalgam of Islamic and pre-Islamic ideals: he is divinely endowed with justice and knowledge as well as moral responsibility. His aim? To bring humans closer to the kingdom of God.[207] Alexander's role is to: '*...keep the frontiers in good condition by sending armies and soldiers there; ...to seek the glory of Islam and keep fresh the traditions of the prophet so he might be praised by the people for that and held in awe by his enemies and so that his rank and dignity might be high with both friend and foe*'![208]

The difference in the *Iskandarnāma* is that the ideal model of a Muslim king is harmoniously combined with his imperfect human nature. This is due to the entertaining character of the narrative. The king's 'human' profile gives another dimension to the model of kingship without ruining the ideal one. The audience appreciates the king's imperfections, since they are entertaining and they enable the auditors to identify themselves with the hero. Thus the king appears so close to the standards of his subjects and at the same time earns their admiration and appreciation. Hence, it could be asked: is the role of the *Iskandarnāma* only entertaining? Or is it possible to detect a political dimension in this prose romance?

It must be suggested that the *Iskandarnāma*, apart from its entertaining character, functions as a device for political propaganda. The *Iskandarnāma* was most probably compiled by order of a patron who belonged to the upper class and was most probably in the royal court, if he was not the Sulṭān himself. [209] It is obvious from the analysis of the narrative, that it manifests political messages about the model of ruler in Islamic Iran. It promotes the supreme character of kingship, its divine basis and its fundamental role for the benefit of the Muslim community which is ensured through geographical (military campaigns) and religious expansion (Islam over the infidels).

The personal features attributed to the king in the *Iskandarnāma* are a *topos* in the *andarz* tradition and form the nucleus of the ideal ruler. Ingeniously, the author incorporates all these dimensions of a political agenda in an account aiming to entertain. Hence, the author and the patron aim to spread their political messages during times of

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[206] A.K.S. Lambton, 'Al-Juwaynī and al-Ghazzālī: The Sultanate', in *State and Government in Medieval Islam*, London Oriental Series 36 (Oxford, 1991[3]), 103-129.
[207] Ibid., 126.
[208] Ibid., 128.
[209] See p.117.

pleasure and convenience for the subjects in general and the courtiers in particular. Hence, the historical importance of the *Iskandarnāma* is invaluable because it reveals another dimension of the devices that the political system in medieval Iran employed in order to achieve political stability and the promotion of the political profile of the king and his government. *Iskandarnāma* must be considered not only as a semi-popular entertaining account but also as a sophisticated means of transmitting political messages with regard to the role of the ruler and his image among his subjects.

Chapter V. The Muslim profile of the hero in the *Iskandarnāma*

The current chapter deals with the Muslim profile of the Graeco-Persian hero, as this profile is traced in the *Iskandarnāma*. In particular, the following features reflect the Islamic cultural background which contributed to the transmission of Alexander's legend to Islamic Iran. Alexander's semi-Iranian identity (his semi-Greek aspect is not presented) in the narrative reflects his pre-Islamic profile amongst the Iranians. His ethnic identity is successfully interwoven with that of his religious (Muslim). This twofold dimension of the hero must have been first shaped in the Sāmānid period, when pre-Islamic Iranian history was Islamicized and several legendary Iranian figures were assimilated into Islamic lore (for example, Kayumārs and Ādam).[1] Hence, the *Iskandarnāma* must be seen as part of the Perso-Islamic tradition that was established by al-Ṭabarī, when he wrote a work combining a history of the Iranian kings and an Abrahamic record of prophets.[2]

Islamic lore and doctrinal details form the nucleus of Alexander's Muslim profile; the prophetic notion of the *"double-horned one"* of the *Qur'ān*, the concept of the *Muslim Conqueror* and *Jihād Warrior* are some of these elements that associate Alexander with Islamic culture. Islamic lore provides the legendary framework through which Alexander's personality emerges as the dominant figure in the *Iskandarnāma*. Key stories such as those of the Tomb of Adam and the Land of Darkness are indicative of the religious and legendary material used in the *Iskandarnāma* as a result of the Middle Eastern monotheistic tradition. Thus the Muslim image of the hero reflects Islamic lore and is differentiated from the philosophical image of Alexander in Niẓāmī's account.[3]

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[1] K. Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs. Cultural landscapes of Early Modern Iran* (Cambridge Mass., 2002), 24-25.
[2] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 40-41.
[3] J.C. Bürgel, 'L'attitude d'Alexandre face à la philosophie grecque dans trois poèmes épiques persans: le Roman d'Alexandre de Nizāmī, l'A'ina-i Iskandarī de Amīr Khusraw Dehlavī et le Khiradnāma-I Iskandarī de Djāmī', in L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*, 55-59.

Dhu'l-qarnayn (=the double-horned one)

One of the basic features of Alexander's Muslim profile is his prophetical dimension through his identification with the *dhu'l-qarnayn* (*the double-horned one*).[4] The eschatological tradition of *dhu'l-qarnayn* in the Islamic tradition originates from the well-known Quranic passage.[5] Since then many interpretations (*tafsīr*) of the Quranic text have been produced, but the exact historical identity of the *"double-horned one"* in the Islamic tradition remains uncertain. This uncertainty results from the lack of any more specific reference to name, origin and other details of *dhu'l-qarnayn* in the Quranic text.[6] Nevertheless, three basic interpretations have been proffered so far regarding his identity.

According to a theory by Āzād, the Quranic *"double-horned one"* can be identified with Cyrus the Great.[7] This theory is based upon the Biblical evidence that in Daniel's dream Cyrus is likened to a double-horned ram[8]. Āzād's Quranic commentary is based mainly upon the historical tradition regarding Alexander and not the legendary version that had been developed in late antiquity in the Middle East. Southgate persuasively opposes Āzād's theory by pointing out the selective character of the material (the historical and not the legendary tradition) that Āzād used in order to reject Alexander as the *"double-horned one"*.[9] In spite of the drawbacks of his theory[10], Āzād's argument concerning Cyrus as the *"double-horned one"* cannot be neglected because the Biblical material he relies upon is a strong asset for his theory.[11]

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[4] A.A. Dihkhudā, 'Dhu 'l-qarnayn' in *Lughātnāma*, ed. M. Mu'īn (Tehran, 1339/1950); Ṣafavī, *Iskandar*, 273-279; Stoneman, 'Alexander the Great', 7-9.

[5] *"They will ask you of dhu'l-qarnayn. Say: I shall recite unto you a (true) account of him"*, *Qur'ān,* 18:82-18:110; Bertels, *Roman ob Aleksandre*, 14-16; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 269-272; Doufikar-Aerts, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, 118-173; eadem, 'The Marginal Voice of a Popular Romance', 18.

[6] Ibid., 279-282.

[7] See Abu 'l-Kalām Āzād, Mawlānā, *Dhu'l-qarnayn yā kūrūsh-i kabīr*, trans. into Persian by M.A. Bāstānī Parīzī (Tehran, 1965), 25; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 286-288; Stoneman, *op.cit.*, 8.

[8] Dan. 8:1-21. *"The double horned ram, whom you saw, are the kings of Media and Persia."* (7:20).

[9] Southgate, 220-221, n.45.

[10] Āzād interprets only the historical tradition of Alexander and ignores the possible pre-Islamic influence of the legendary tradition upon the Quranic evidence. Moreover, he overestimates the role of the Hebrew tradition which formed the model of a Jewish Alexander. Hence, due to lack of adequate comparative methodology Āzād's theory is defective. See also Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 288-294.

[11] Āzād's theory for Cyrus as *dhu'l-qarnayn* was established in the twentieth century and served nationalistic sentiment in Iran.

Another theory identifies *dhu'l-qarnayn* with Tubba', King of Yemen Ṣa'ab al-Harit who lived in pre-Islamic times.[12] This theory is supported by Ibn Hishām's *al-Tījān* (ninth century AD) and draws material from Wahb b. Munabbih's lost account (654-732 AD).[13] The narrative contains several well known episodes, such as the conquest of infidel peoples in the east and west, the wall against the Gog and Magog and the Water of Life.[14] However, the existence of two episodes (pilgrimage to the holiest place (Mecca) and the hero's acceptance as sage by his contemporaries)[15] regarding the life of the *"double-horned one"* creates many problems; besides the Arabic and Persian versions, these episodes are not included in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition but they are found in the Syriac *"Christian Legend"*.[16] The issue of the influence of the *"Christian Legend"* upon the Arabic and Quranic tradition remains open as well as the case for the identification of the king of Yemen with the *"Double-Horned One"*. In general, this story gives a parallel of the Islamic conquests in the west and glorifies the South Arabian traditions.

It has been also suggested that the *dhu'l-qarnayn* is Moses. This theory is based on the exegesis of the Qur'an in association with the Alexander tradition and the Epic of Gilgamesh.[17] The Alexander Romance has been influenced by the story of Gilgamesh and Alexander's story as Prophet-King has many similarities with the life of Moses. Common and key story between these traditions is that of the Fish, attested in the Babylonian Talmud. According to this story Alexander sits by a well and takes out salted fish to wash them. These give a sweet scent and Alexander states that the water of this well comes from the Garden of Eden.[18] The story appears also in the Greek versions of

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[12] For this theory, as well as an overall approach to the issue of the double-horned, see Southgate, *op.cit.*, 196.

[13] T. Nagel, *Alexander der Grosse in der frühislamischen Volksliteratur* (Walldorf/Hessen, 1978); Southgate, *op.cit.*, 221, n.49 and Duri, *The Rise of History,* 131; Doufikar-Aerts, *op,cit.*, 122-124.

[14] Stoneman, *op.cit.*, 11-12.

[15] This is mentioned in al-Tijān and is influenced by Munabbih's account. Southgate, 198.

[16] In the Syriac legend these two episodes have a Christian character: Instead of Mecca, Alexander visits Jerusalem and again he appears as a prophetic figure. The *Christian legend about Alexander* is based on the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account (II.37-39). See *the Syriac Version*, lxxvii.

[17] A. Abel, 'Dhu 'l-qarnayn, prophète de l'universalité', *Annuaire de I'Institute de Philologie et d'Histoire Orient et Slaves,* 11 (1951), 6-18; B.M. Wheeler, 'Moses or Alexander? Early Islamic Exegesis of Qur'ān 18:60-65', *JNES*, 57 (1998), 204-215.

[18] Ibid., 194-204.

Alexander stories. A similar story involves Moses in the Qur`ān.[19] Like Alexander. in Islam Moses also embodies the fused model of Prophet Conqueror and King, a model which was also reflected by the Prophet of Islam.[20] The Quranic passage could certainly be associated with Moses, given his similarities with the *double-horned one*.

The most widely supported theory identifies the *double-horned one* with Alexander the Great. The correlation of the Quranic quotation[21] with the anonymous *dhu'l-qarnayn* who also built the wall against the Gog and Magog on the one hand and the pre-Islamic Christian literary tradition (which was transmitted to the Arabs through translations, mainly from Syriac to Arabic) for the eponymous prophet (Alexander) who also built a wall against the Gog and Magog, must have had a strong impact on the Muslim popular mind and, thus, most of the historical sources of the Islamic period consider that *dhu'l-qarnayn* is Alexander the Great, as already mentioned.[22] This theory is based upon the etymology of the Arabic title as well as the coinage of Alexander`s time. In his lifetime Alexander established the model of the *King Deus,* wearing the two horns in the form of a diadem, as is attested in his portraits on the coinage of his lifetime.[23] In Arabic *'qarn'* means *"horn"*, *"summit"*, *"the first visible part of the sun"* and *"century"*. Alexander's life is connected in a way with these meanings because he visited the world in the east and the west, the Land of Darkness and Light, and he had two horns as parts of his diadem.[24]

Each one of the four above theories remains equally valid. If it could be suggested that one of them is closer to reality, then it would be the third. The justification for this choice cannot be provided by the literary evidence because this has been contradictory and insufficient so far. Unless new literary material is forthcoming, the answer can be

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[19] 18:60-65; Wheeler, *op.cit.,* 196.
[20] Ibid., 214-215.
[21] 18:96.
[22] Al-Ṭabarī, *Ta'rīkh,* 87-95; idem, *Tarjuma-yi Tafsīr-i Ṭabarī*, Persian trans. Ḥ. Yaghmā'ī, 7 vols. (Tehran, 1339-1334/1960-1965), vol. 7, 370-371; al-Mas'ūdī, *Murūj*, 2:248; for the rest of the Arabic sources, such as al-Dīnawarī, al-Iṣfahānī, Ibn al-Athīr and others, see Southgate, 190-196. For the Persian sources see Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāma*, ed. V. Dastgirdī (Tehran, 1335/1956), 358-365; Bal'amī, *Ta'rīkh*, 124; al-Bīrūnī, *Athār al-bāqiya*, Sachau, 44, 18 and 49-51; *Fārsnāma*, 56:18-20-58.; *MT*, 31; Mazzaoui, 'Alexander', 39.
[23] P. Green, *Alexander of Macedon, a Historical Biography* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1991), 478; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 301. See p. 170, n.37.
[24] A.R. Anderson, `Alexander's Horns`, *Amer.Phil.Ass.Tr.Pr.,* 58 (1927), 100-122; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 297-302; A.M. Piemontese, `Alexandre le 'circumvigateur` dans le roman persan de Tarsusi', in *Alexandre le Grand figure de l'incomplétude*, ed. Fr. de Polignac (Rome, 2000), 100.

provided by oral tradition in Hellenistic times and late antiquity. The story of the Yemeni king does not seem strong enough to have influenced the Middle East in pre-Islamic times. On the contrary, it must have been restricted to the Arabian Peninsula. It is not attested in any literary source in the Greek, Persian or Jewish tradition.

By contrast, the figures of Alexander and Cyrus as kings of vast empires enjoyed more popularity in the Middle East. Cyrus's posthumous fame in the region was ensured by two events: the establishment of the Achaemenid Empire in 556 BC and his decision to liberate the Jews of Babylon and allow them to return to Jerusalem and reconstruct their temple in 539 BC. Both events had a universal impact: the first one resulted in the unification of the Middle East under the rule of one supreme king, and the second resulted in Cyrus's incorporation into the religious-ethnic tradition of the Jews, as a token of their gratitude for his generosity toward them.

The conquest of Achaemenid Iran by Alexander changed the whole picture of the Middle East. Alexander's posthumous fame was ensured by his own military and political achievements which inspired his successors. He was also glorified by the Jewish tradition. The Hellenistic kingdoms established a royal ideology based on Alexander's model as God-Ruler. Thus, a state propaganda was promoted by the Seleucids in favour of Alexander's name as a means of legitimizing their political power. It was probably at that time that a vast oral tradition concerning the 'miraculous king Alexander' was under formation. This is proved by the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance which draws material from both the oral and literary traditions. The *Alexander romance* was translated into Persian, Syriac and other languages.[25] This is direct evidence that Alexander's legendary life appealed to the public mind at that time. In fact, his legend dominated the Middle East from late antiquity onwards. By that time Cyrus' fame must have been dramatically restricted probably to within a part of the Iranian population and the Jewish communities. Alexander's legendary oral and literary tradition had a huge impact on the literary developments of the Middle East and by the time of the emergence of Islam his figure must certainly have overshadowed every other legendary royal figure in the region. Hence, a crucial question emerges: could the evidence of the oral tradition be identified with that of the literary versions? This cannot be answered with certainty. The

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[25] See p.25.

coexistence of two traditions, an oral and a written, was very likely in late pre-Islamic Iran. The oral tradition, favourable to Alexander, influenced the secular written tradition of the Sasanians, in contrast to the well established Zoroastrian tradition which was hostile to Alexander.[26] What is important is that in the oral tradition, the *double-horned one* was probably Alexander the Great due to the popular reputation he enjoyed. And even if there was a contradiction between the oral and literary traditions related to the figure of the *double-horned one*, it is the public mind that counts and forms the new standards. And in the people's mind Alexander was *dhu'l-qarnayn.*

So far an introduction has been given regarding the already known early literary tradition that was established in early Islamic times about the figure of *Alexander as dhu'l-qarnayn.* Now it is necessary to proceed to unknown trends and deal with the relation between the *Iskandarnāma* and the Islamic tradition regarding the figure of the *double-horned one*. Due to its literary sources (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*[27] and others) and oral background, the *Iskandarnāma* must be seen as an inseparable part of this literary tradition for *Alexander dhu'l-qarnayn* in the Islamic period. An analysis of the textual evidence derived from the *Iskandarnāma* will prove the above statement and will denote the special character and role of the *"double-horned"* in the narrative.

In the *Iskandarnāma*, the connection between Alexander and the figure of *dhu'l-qarnayn* is *ipso facto* proven and the author identifies Alexander with *dhu'l-qarnayn* from the very beginning.[28] Alexander's prophetical dimension is clearly mentioned in the narrative: *"... and Alexander was a prophet before Jesus as has been known and verified in (various) stories"*.[29] The author does not examine whether *dhu'l-qarnayn* is Alexander; he does not have any critical reservations about this issue. He is not a scholar of *tafsīr* who analyzes his material meticulously but an author, aiming simply to reproduce a narrative. Even if his intellectual background were worth mentioning, his limited religious horizons would prevent him from being suspicious enough to doubt the Islamic tradition of the *double-horned* Alexander. Only by the verbal connection between

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[26] See p.41.
[27] *QA*, 321-333.
[28] *IN*, 5:8-9.
[29] "و اسکندر پیش از عیسی پیغمبر بوده است چنان که در تواریخها معلوم و محقق است.", ibid., 175:18-19.

the two names does the author suggest that Alexander and *dhu'l-qarnayn* is the same person.[30] The author clearly reflects and reproduces in an uncritical way the concept of his time regarding the *double-horned Alexander*.

The author, however, is not totally uncritical of his material. First, he acknowledges that the definition of the meaning of the epithet *dhu'l-qarnayn* is difficult and the only way to approach its meaning is to narrate the story from the beginning. This is a kind of literary trick on the part of the author to justify the narration of Alexander's life. Second, attention must be paid to his intention to explain the attribution of the epithet *"double-horned one"* to Alexander.[31] Nevertheless, he does not proceed to any systematic argumentation; he implies that the only justification of this attribution are the great deeds of Alexander. Again this critical remark acts as a trick justifying the narration of the *Iskandarnāma*. Both of his above critical points suggest that at the time of the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*, the questions of the meaning of the epithet and the reason for attributing it to Alexander were under discussion. However, the issue of the real identity of the "*double-horned one*" remained undisputed due to its Quranic tradition. The repeated use of the epithet in connection only with Alexander leaves no doubt about the identity of the "d*ouble-horned one"* in the *Iskandarnāma*. The immediate connection between the name "Alexander" and the epithet *dhu'l-qarnayn,* both in the main body of the text and the subtitle, create an imposing image of excellence and magnitude for Alexander.[32]

In the Land of Darkness and his pursuit for the Water of Life, Alexander is directly identified with the Quranic *"double-horned one"*.[33] This time, however, the author combines saga and doctrinal evidence in order to promote the narrative; Alexander's legendary adventures in the Land of Darkness are associated with the

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[30] "**اسکندر ذوالقرنین**" (="*Alexander the double-horned one*"), ibid., 5:20.

[31] The author narrates the story of Alexander's childhood with his grandfather Faylaqūs and after that he says " **... و این قصه از بهر آن گفته می آید که تا بدانی که این ذولقرنین که بود** ", (=*This story is narrated about him so that you know who this double-horned one was...)*, ibid., 5:7-8.

[32] Ibid., 5:20 and 96:7; also see ibid., 192:19 "**گفت پادشاه جهان ذوالقرنین...** " (=*the king of the world, dhu'l-qarnayn, said...)*.

[33] " **حتی اذا بلغ مغرب الشمش و جدها تغرب فی عین حمة و وجد عندها قوماً قلنا یا ذاالقرنین اما ان تعذب و اماان تتخذ فیهم حسنا**", (= *Till, when he reached the place where the sun sets, he found it setting in a muddy spring, and found a people thereabout: we said: O dhu'l-qarnayn, either punish or show them kindness)*, ibid., 211:4-6, Southgate, 59 and *Qur'ān* 18:86.

famous Quranic passage. The Quranic influence upon the Islamic lore regarding the *"double-horned one"* in the narrative is obvious in the episode of Alexander's dialogue with Buqrāquz, Shāhmalik's son. When Alexander asks him about the place where the sun rises, Buqrāquz answers that among the inhabitants there are Gog and Magog (or Elephant Ears).[34] This point is really important in order to understand the use of the legendary material in association with other forms of evidence, like the Quranic evidence. Both the Quranic and legendary material are successfully interwoven throughout the development of the narrative. The result of this combination is clear; Alexander as *dhu'l-qarnayn* is confirmed by the mutual agreement of the folkloric and the doctrinal data of the time. In particular, the legendary element in this case exists along with the Quranic passage and, in fact, it covers the gap of the identity of the *double-horned one*.[35]

The use of the epithet *dhu'l-qarnayn* not only has a verbal and metaphysical dimension in the narrative; its dimension is material as well. In one of the episodes in Turkistān Alexander exposes his horns that he always keeps concealed.[36] Apparently the concept of the *double-horned one* in the *Iskandarnāma* is both spiritual and material. Alexander is not only a prophet with the spiritual notion of conquering the east and west, the two horns of the universe. He wears them on his head but they are concealed. Alexander reveals them only when he judges that it is necessary. His horns are real and

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[34] *IN*, 507:7-8. The term *'Elephant Ears'* is mentioned in the narrative on two more occasions (ibid., 534, 701-715; Southgate, 120, 150-153). They are prominent figures in the Biblical (Gen. 10:2, Ezekiel 38, 39) and Islamic tradition (*Qur'ān*, 18:82-18:99. and 21:96). In al-Ṭabarī's *Tafsīr* (trans. Yaghmā'ī, 1:195-196), it is mentioned that Muḥammad tried to convert them but they refused. For this reason they were doomed to Hell surrounded by the wall-barrier that the *dhu'l-qarnayn* built. They will break this barrier only when one of them becomes Muslim. Then they will conquer the world and their reign will last until the Day of Judgment. See also *QA*, 328-330.

[35] The Quranic passage in the narrative is worthy of literary attention. The first sentence is in Arabic whilst the rest of the passage is cited in Persian. This is not an uncommon phenomenon for a Persian text of the eleventh and twelfth centuries AD. The coexistence of the two languages in one passage is a sign of literary evolution and reflects the transitional period of the use of the Persian language, replacing the Arabic, as a tool of literary expression in Islamic Iran. Given both, first that the *Iskandarnāma* is a written form of a rich oral tradition and second, that the use of the Arabic vocabulary by the Iranians was overwhelming in the era of the High Caliphate, these Arabic sentences can be seen as tokens of the use of Arabic in the story-telling process. Arabic formulae used in story-telling must have been a sign of a 'fashionable' way of narrating events and expressing literary skillfulness and superiority by the *naqqāls*. The exact extent of the Arabic text in the initial copies of the *Iskandarnāma* remains unknown.

[36] "...و شاه اسکندر بخندید و آن هر دو قرن که پنهان داشتی بیرون کرد", (= *and the King Alexander laughed and he revealed the two horns which he kept concealed*), *IN*, 318:5-6.

manifest in a legendary framework Alexander's historical endeavour to establish the cult of the *King-Deus*.[37]

Conquering Muslim Warrior

If the notion of the *"double-horned one"* becomes the nucleus of the Muslim profile of Alexander in the narrative, there are a variety of aspects of Alexander`s behaviour combined with Islamic lore. Both of them constitute the other dimensions of the hero's Islamic image. These aspects exist in full harmony with the notion of the *double-horned one* and confirm it in every aspect of Alexander's life. The systematic analysis of these aspects in the *Iskandarnāma* is the aim of this chapter.

In religious and political terms, the whole journey of Alexander is a holy war against idolaters.[38] The geography of the world is clearly divided into: the *dār al-Islām* and the *dār al-ḥarb* (the *Realm of Islam* and the *Realm of War* respectively). Alexander always acts from his base in the *House of Islam,* from which he operates against the *House of War*. The angle through which the narrative presents Alexander is that of the *dār al-Islām*. The infidels are always on the other side ready to face Alexander. Such is the sequence of events that the reader is identified with the hero and sees the hero's enemies as his own. The linear action of the plot moves from the *Realm of Islam* to the *Realm of War* and this reflects the basic Islamic belief in the ultimate victory of Islam over the Realm of ignorance and idolatry. It is within this linear form of action that Alexander's Muslim profile is ingeniously placed.

The underlying characteristic of his Muslim profile is that Alexander is a world conqueror (*shahrgīr*)[39] conducting an endless *jihād*. He is the undisputed master of his

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[37] The above quotation from the *Iskandarnāma* could reflect a historical detail of Alexander's time and can be identified with the ram's horns of the syncretistic Graeco-Egyptian deity Ammon Zeus (see p. 166, n. 24). The quotation of the two horns in the Persian text may be considered as indirect evidence of being a remnant of the ancient past in the Islamic legendary tradition concerning Alexander. Perhaps one could interpret the legend of the *double horned one* through Alexander's portraits in coinage. The fact that there is a legendary story which presents Alexander wearing his horns all the time could be a legendary alteration of the historical past according to which Alexander probably wore the horns only at official and ceremonial moments. This story could have been orally transmitted and preserved. Unfortunately, due to lack of literary evidence from late antiquity this hypothesis cannot be verified for the time being. For Alexander's horns in general, see Anderson, 'Alexander's Horns', 100-122.

[38] Southgate, 'Portrait', 283.

[39] *"Shahrgīr"*, *IN, 12:6, "shahrgīr"* and *"shāhjahān"*, ibid., 96:16, 126:17.

army and leads his soldiers onto the battlefield with confidence. As a *ghāzī (=holy warrior)*, Alexander reflects basic aspects of the Islamic hero. One of them is that of *takbīr* which is uttered by Alexander or his soldiers during their fights against the idolaters. The expression *Allāhu Akbar* (= *God is Greatest*) is repeated frequently in the narrative so as to denote the religious character of Alexander's campaign. In Fairyland Alexander utters the *takbīr* and attacks the fairies at a moment when his soldiers are disappointed by the development of the battle.[40] The result is to make most of the fairies withdraw. In India, the Arab soldiers of his army on their camels shout the *takbīr* when they attack the elephants of King Porus.[41] The scene is described in an epic way since the assault of the Arabs and the *takbīr* are combined with the beating of the drums and the throwing of bottles of naphtha against the elephants. But the *takbīr* is not uttered only in time of warfare but also in time of peace. In Ceylon the *takbīr* is pronounced as a sign of astonishment by Alexander's soldiers when they see a huge mountain appearing in the middle of the sea.[42] In the land of Zangīs, Alexander's men utter *"Allāhu Akbar"*, as a sign of relief and enthusiasm when Alexander, inspired by God, strengthens his men in order to face successfully the horrifying Zangīs.[43]

Regardless of who utters the *takbīr*, Alexander or his soldiers, the result is the same for Alexander's image. The voice of his soldiers in this case is identified with the voice of Alexander. Moreover, the *takbīr* has a magic power with beneficial results for those who utter it. In fact it is an invocation to God for support and help against infidels or apostates. Success is certain when the person who utters it is a righteous Muslim. In the case of Alexander, the pagan fairies retreat in fear without a second thought, thus enabling Alexander to make his assault.[44]

Alexander's Muslim profile is also reflected through his devout and pious character in the narrative.[45] His piety takes many forms; it is mainly expressed through

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[40] *... و لشکرش همه گریان و سوزان بودند و شاه... در میدان آمد و جولان کرد و آواز داد. گفت الله اکبر!* (="*All men of his army were weeping and were in grief and the king... entered the battlefield, circled around and cried God Is Greatest!*"), *IN*, 358:11-12.

[41] Ibid., 19:12 and *IN* 94:4. The *takbīr* does not exist in the *Dārābnāma* in the episode with Fūr. *DN*, 197.

[42] Ibid., 88:8.

[43] Ibid., 425: 8. Compare the episode between and the Zangīs in the *DN*, 2:400, which does not include any *takbīr* expression.

[44] *IN*, 358:13-14.

[45] See p.146.

the fundamental aspect of Islamic piety, prayer. One of the five pillars of Islam, prayer, dominates the daily life of the faithful through its systematic repetition in five different parts of the day. Alexander often appears in the narrative praying. In fact, prayers are used in the narrative as an indispensable definition and division of time[46]. When Alexander kills a woman without being aware that she is pregnant, he repents of his sin.[47] Hence, he withdraws from his duties, bows his forehead to the ground and asks God day and night for forgiveness. After seven days, he returns to his royal duties.[48] In his prayer Alexander expresses his gratitude towards God for His benevolence towards the hero: *"O God you have brought into fruition everything that your servant desired..."*.[49]

Another important aspect of *Ghāzī Alexander* is that of converting idolaters to Islam. The subjugation and subsequent conversion of the infidels are intimately associated with his image as hero of the Islamic faith and the goal of his mission. According to the Islamic tradition, a Muslim must ask non-Muslims, either the People of the Book (*aḥl al-kitāb: Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians*) or idolaters (polytheists), to embrace Islam peacefully. If they embrace Islam, they are incorporated into the Muslim community (*umma*). If they refuse to become Muslims, then the *People of the Book* are forced to pay the poll tax (=*jizya*) whilst idolaters face capital punishment.[50] In the *Iskandarnāma*, Alexander, does not appear to face Christians, Jews or Zoroastrians. His war is solely against idolatry and every foe he encounters belongs to this category. Thus Alexander is not placed in any dilemma regarding the treatment of his defeated foes; they must either become Muslims or die. Alexander's converting mission is not only the result of his own initiative but it is also the Will of God. The Angel of God advises Alexander not to face Arslānkhān and what to do in the Place where the Sun rises. His mission is to restore order and give power to Muslims.[51]

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[46] "... تا نماز دیگر چون وقت فرو شدن آفتاب بود" (="until the next prayers, when it was sunset") *IN*, 92:3.
[47] Ibid., 616:7-8.
[48] Ibid., 616:21.
[49] "باز خدایا این بنده را همه کام دل دادی"، ibid., 93:9-10.
[50] *Qur'ān*, 17:18; *"I have been ordered to fight polytheists until they say that there is no god but Allah; if they say it they are secure in their blood and property"*. M. Khadduri, *War and Peace in Islam* (Baltimore, 1955), 96.
[51] *IN*, 747:1-6.

Alexander in the narrative converts idolaters in Islam by force. In Kashmīr, he puts the people of the region to death because they refuse to embrace Islam.[52] When he defeats Fūr, he asks the latter to convert to Islam but he refuses to do so. When Alexander asks the Indian king to pay his tax and the latter refuses, then, he has Fūr beheaded.[53] In Islamic terms, capital punishment is one of Alexander's legitimate means in order to convert an idolater. Almost the same event occurs in Yemen where Alexander demands that King Mundhar of Yemen accept the Islamic faith. In China and the city of Yaris, Alexander does not have to punish the idolaters. In another case, he plunders the city near the Caspian Sea, when he realizes that its king is an idolater[54]. He considers that the infidels are afflicted with blindness because they have refused to embrace Islam.[55] In Fairyland, Alexander decides to have the giant Sinda beheaded *'because he was an infidel'*[56]. The same pattern of the idolatrous ruler who rejects Alexander's call to embrace Islam and then is put to death appears in the case of Turānmalik and his son, who are eventually hanged.[57] Death as a means of enforcement and the personal prestige of *Alexander shahrgīr* are on most occasions effective and enable Alexander to achieve his goal, the embracing of Islam by the idolaters. In Ceylon, Kayd, the King of the Island, embraces Islam accepting Alexander's demand.[58] In Central Asia, many of Arslānkhān's followers accept the new faith and Alexander warns Arslānkhān to do the same so as to avoid a gloomy future. The latter then asks for a truce to recover from his wounds.[59]

But the case of embracing Islam does not take place only on the battlefield. In an epic romance, the main hero fights on two battlefields, that of war (epic) and that of love (romance). Hence, the enforcement of embracing Islam by the idolaters has two dimensions for Alexander. As already shown, the *double-horned* does not have any reservations about putting his idolatrous foes to death for refusing to change their faith. But what happens in the case of beautiful and noble women with whom Alexander falls in love?

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[52] Ibid., 54:20-55:1.
[53] Ibid., 22:10-11.
[54] Ibid., 221:13.
[55] Ibid., 255:10-11.
[56] Ibid., 405:6.
[57] Ibid., 578:5-7.
[58] Ibid., 82:20-81:1.
[59] Ibid., 681:16.

Alexander in the *Iskandarnāma* also has the profile of the irresistible lover.[60] When he wants to marry an idolatrous princess, then he stipulates the condition that she must become a Muslim first. For example, in India he asks King Āzādbukht to marry the latter's daughter, Māhāfarīn, but she must be given to him *"according to his faith"*.[61] It is according to the *"rules of the pure faith of the glorious God"* that Alexander signs the contract of marriage with Māhāfarīn.[62] Alexander's devotion to Islamic principles is clearly depicted in his dialogue with Māhāfarīn. When she tells Alexander that her father "worships the planet Saturn and the Brahman and the citizens worship the cow", the world conqueror makes his point quite clear: *"O, girl! I will not and I am not able to share your pain if you are not tired of idolatry and you do not accept the God of Heaven and Earth"*.[63] Then Māhāfarīn, due to her love for Alexander, immediately renounces her previous religious beliefs and embraces Islam. In Yemen, the same pattern of story takes place. Alexander asks for Suhayl's hand after King Mundhar's (her father) conversion to Islam.[64]

In general, the division of the world into the *dār al-Islām* and the *dār al-ḥarb* is the main idea of the narrative, characterizing the hero's world concept and action. Alexander divides people into two categories; believers and infidels. This religious division in his mind is distinctive of the hero's world concept and the way Alexander faces reality and promotes the plot by accomplishing his main goal, the expansion of the Islamic faith. This strict division characterizes the hero's behaviour towards women. In the case of Māhāfarīn's conversion, the contrast between the right faith and that of paganism is quite clear.[65] Several other episodes reflect the above division; by hearing that the prisoners of the *davālpāyān* (=the ones with the hairy feet) are Muslims, he is

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[60] See p.216.

[61] "*...بردین من...*", Ibid., 26:18.

[62] "*برسنت دین پاک ایزد عز و جل*", ibid., 28:7.

[63] "*ای دختر! من در کار تو آنکه رنج برم و توانم بردن که تو از کافری بیزار شوی و بخداوند آسمان و زمین بگروی.*", Ibid., 30:5-6.

[64] It is noteworthy that the converting process by Alexander is not always successful. The episode with the cunning Shāhmalik reflects the phenomenon of spurious conversions. Shāhmalik pretends to be a Muslim and then rebels against the surprised and enraged Alexander, ibid., 687:21-22. Moreover, Shāhmalik clearly states to Alexander that he is not going to embrace Islam "*because the older faith is better*" (ibid., 694:20-21). In this case, the narrative reflects realistic phenomena (false conversion) in legendary frames (Shāhmalik's episode in the narrative).

[65] See n.62 above.

distressed;[66] when he approaches the Land of Darkness, Alexander discovers the Muslim city near the border with that Land;[67] in the Akhḍar sea, he does not hesitate to plunder the city of the infidels;[68] in Fairyland, Arāqīt warns Alexander that if he is Muslim then he can cross their land without harm: *"If he is an idolater then we will fight him"*.[69] He manages to convert 30,000 infidel Turks in a day.[70] On the whole, Alexander is absolutely successful in one of the main purposes of his campaign and the narrative, the expansion of Islam and the defeat of idolatry.

The *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition

Besides his images as 'double-horned' and Muslim world conqueror, Alexander's Muslim profile in the narrative is further promoted by the association of the hero with Islamic lore.[71] The *Iskandarnāma,* as a popular text, has incorporated rich legendary material derived from several sources such as the *Qur'ān* and the well-known *Isrā'īliyyāt* tradition.[72] In particular, this tradition has been established in several types of Islamic literature through the work *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* by Tha'alibī in Arabic and Nīshāpūrī in Persian.[73] The latter's work has influenced catalytically several aspects of Islamic literary tradition. The foundation of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* influence upon Islamic lore is probably due to the first collection of such stories by the bilingual Yemenite Persian Wahb b. Munabbih (654-732 AD).[74] He was the reason for the translation into Arabic and transmission into Islamic culture of many pre-Islamic myths, legends and sagas.[75] Munabbih was the source for many stories of Nīshāpūrī's *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. In the case of the *Iskandarnāma*, he is mentioned as the source for several stories, such as the Zangīs, fairies, legends of

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[66] *IN*, 96:1-2.
[67] Ibid., 201:20-21.
[68] Ibid., 221:13.
[69] *"...اگر کافرست با او جنگ کنیم..."*, Ibid., 356:5.
[70] Ibid., 738:14.
[71] Southgate, 'Portrait', 280.
[72] The so-called *Isrā'īliyyāt tradition* is the integration into the Islamic mind and lore of pre-Islamic Judaic and Christian materials. See Duri, *op.cit.*, 125-126; G. von Grunebaum, 'The Sources of Islamic Civilization', in *CHIs*, 2/B, 488; Doufikar-Aerts, *op.cit.*, 126-127.
[73] Duri, *The Rise of History*, 134. The current thesis uses the Persian version, see n.27 above.
[74] Duri, *op.cit.*, 122-123.
[75] Ibid., 124-125.

David and Solomon.[76] The term *Isrā'īliyyāt* reflects the pre-existing Biblical tradition and influence upon Islamic lore; legendary episodes dealing with tales from the Creation up to the time of the Prophet of Islam. It also includes legends about the lives of several prophets from the Bible, saints and mythical figures of the Islamic tradition which have been composed and integrated into the Islamic legendary tradition.[77]

The *Iskandarnāma* includes many episodes of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* cycle, other Islamic traditions as well as lore stemming from pre-Islamic Iranian times. Alexander is admirably associated with these traditions by being the protagonist of several Islamic legendary episodes. These could basically be divided in the narrative into two categories: episodes in monotheistic sacred places, episodes with holy figures. Alexander appears in these episodes as a Muslim hero interacting with well-established legendary figures and events of Islamic lore.

With regard to the stories taking place in sacred places, the first episode mentioned is that of Alexander's pilgrimage to the Tomb of Ādam in Ceylon.[78] Alexander reaches Ceylon after staying at the palace of Kayd, the King of India. Then he gives rich, golden gowns to the Indian guards of Ādam's tomb. On the mountain where the tomb is Alexander sees an area from which light comes and a spot of smoke and darkness. The Indian guards explain to Alexander that these two miracles go back to the time of Ādam's fall to earth; the light at his tomb comes from his footsteps, the light spot is a result of Ādam's touch and the dark spot is the place where Cain killed Abel.[79] Another miracle drawing Alexander's attention is the various herbs on the same mountain. The unpleasant, bitter herbs grew from the tears of Ādam who wept for his sins. The pleasant, fresh herbs grew from Ādam's joy at his repentance and salvation

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[76] *IN*, 219:11.

[77] J. Knappert, *Islamic Legends, Histories of the Heroes, Saints and Prophets of Islam*, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1985), I:3-4.

[78] *IN*, 76-100; Southgate, 30; The legend about the Tomb of Adam is a Muslim transformation of a story of Judaeo-Christian origin. When Adam was expelled from Paradise, the first place he reached on earth was a mountain in Ceylon (Sarāndīb). At that place he repented. About the story of the Tomb of Adam and its variations see *Qur'ān*, 2:30; 15:26; *QA*, 20; *DN*, 2:291-301; F. Rosenthal, 'The Influence of the Biblical Tradition on Muslim Historiography', in *Historians of the Middle East*, ed. B. Lewis and P. M. Holt, (London, 1962), 43; Knappert, *op.cit.*, 39-41.

[79] *IN*, 86:7-8.

after God accepted him.[80] After staying in Ceylon for a day. Alexander goes on board and along with numerous ships and boats he sets off for the next stage of his campaign.

Another episode in the narrative is the arrival of Alexander at Mecca and the House of God.[81] Once he encamps outside Mecca, the chiefs of the city go into Alexander's presence and he accepts them. Alexander sees Arabs for the first time and he is touched by their holiness. He pays tribute to the chiefs of Mecca and then lets them return to their city. The following day he enters the House of God and asks Him to forgive his sins.[82] After staying in Mecca for fifteen days, Alexander visits Minā, Muzdālifa and 'Arafat. Then he carries out his religious rites by drinking from the well of Zam-zam and praying at Maqām-i Ibrāḥīm. Once he is finished with the ritual, he decorates the House of God with silk spending vast quantities of gold. At that precise point, the compiler praises God, the name of Abraham and his son Ismā'īl as well as the generations that followed.[83] Then Alexander restores a young man, from whom a light was emanating (=the true heir), as the chief of Mecca.

Regarding the second category of episodes, the story of Alexander's Visit to the Land of Darkness seeking for the Water of Life is one of the central stories in the narrative and of great importance for the Islamization of the hero[84]. In fact the Quest for the Water of Life (*āb-i ḥayāt*), a personal goal, is one of the two devices (the other is the expansion of Islam) which promote the development of the narrative. After his adventures in Andalusia, Alexander travels to an unknown land where he discovers a strange city. Its inhabitants live in peace without crime and lack of justice. The reason for this situation is the embracing of the right faith taught by the prophet Khiḍr.[85] Alexander meets Khiḍr and together they set off for the greatest adventure, the Quest for

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[80] Ibid., 87:2.
[81] Ibid., 101-106; *DN* 2: 594; *QA*, 322.
[82] *IN*, 101:19-102:2.
[83] The reference to Abraham's name in the narrative aims to associate Alexander's deeds with the most important Prophet for Judaism and Islam. See *Qur'ān*, 2:135, 3:95.
[84] *IN*, 201:20; *DN*, 2:575. Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 54, 182-185, 190-194.
[85] Lit. '*the Green One*', the unidentified servant of Moses in the Quranic passage (18:60-82). He is the mysterious and immortal guide in popular Islamic lore and the hidden initiator of those who walk the mystical path. He represents eternal liveliness and freshness of spirit. He symbolizes the freshness of knowledge "drawn out of the living sources of life" and has come to symbolize the benign presence of the divine wisdom imparted by the Divine to Khidr and to the Prophet Muhammad. He is considered a prophet and an angel functioning as a guide to those who seek God. For an analysis of Khidr, see A.J. Wensinck, 'Al-Khadir', *EI*^{2}, 4, 902-905.

Immortality. Khiḍr is appointed as guide to Alexander`s huge army and he protects and leads it when they are en route but disappears when they stop for rest. The trip in the Land of Darkness lasts four months and is difficult due to lack of food and the unknown character of the land. Eventually Khiḍr finds the Water of Life and drinks from it. However, when Alexander is invited by the prophet to drink also, the spring disappears and the king cannot acquire immortality. His depression is indescribable.[86] When they leave the Land of Darkness, Alexander goes to the mountain Qāf where he sees the angel Isrāfīl with the trumpet in his mouth being in the fourth sphere.[87]

In the episode of the Water of Life in the Land of Darkness there are two important figures with whom Alexander is directly or indirectly associated; the figure of Khiḍr and that of the Prophet Elias.[88] The connection between Khiḍr and Alexander is direct; the former appears suddenly just before Alexander`s travels to the Land of Darkness. Khiḍr's divine mission is to help Alexander find the Water of Life.[89] His role is not a coincidence; Khiḍr managed to drink from the Water of Life and become immortal.[90] His nature is symbolic and intimately associated with Alexander's aim: immortality. For the hero, Khiḍr is a living example giving him courage and hope to continue his quest for the Water of Life. Besides Khiḍr's sacred and legendary figure, the reference to two cities, the city of Jabālqa and the mountain Qāf, strengthen the Islamic framework of the story, hence the association of Alexander with the Islamic tradition.

With respect to the Prophet Elias, his association with Alexander is only peripheral to the narrative.[91] When Alexander enters the Land of Darkness, he reaches a town whose inhabitants are Muslims and the reason for their conversion is the Prophet

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[86] "...و شاه اسکندر از بهر آب حیات دل تنگ بود که امید زندگانی نمانده بود." (= *and the King Alexander was depressed for the Water of Life because the hope for immortality had deserted him*), *IN,* 210:7-8. For Alexander's failure to find the Source of Immortality, see also *DN,* 2:585-586.

[87] *IN,* 210:13-15. About the importance of Qāf for the Muslim cosmogony see M. Streck, "Kāf", *EI*^{2}, 4, 400-402.

[88] Lit. '*the myrtle*'. According to Islamic lore, both figures, Khiḍr and Elias have been appointed by the Divine to help Muslim travellers in the desert and the sea. About the prophetic figure of Elias, see Ed. Cedironn, 'Elijah', *EJ,* 6 (1971), 631-642.

[89] *IN,* 202:20-21.

[90] Khiḍr will be alive until Doomsday. See Knappert, *op.cit.,* 10.

[91] In the *Dārābnāma,* however, Elias appears along with Khidr helping Alexander, at least in the beginning, to find the Water of Life. *DN,* 2:585.

Elias who through Yisa', his disciple, convinced them to embrace Islam.[92] The strange coincidence with Elias is that, along with Khiḍr, he is another immortal figure in the Islamic tradition. He went up to Heaven without dying.[93] Thus, in the episode of the Land of Darkness, Alexander is associated with two sacred figures of the monotheistic tradition who play a prominent role in the Islamic legendary tradition. Both of them appear in the Book of Alexander as the figure Khiḍr sent by God or the chronologically remote prophet (Elias) promoting indirectly the integration of Alexander into the Islamic tradition[94].

Alexander and Solomon

By reading the narrative, it is quite easy to perceive the frequent repetition of Solomon's name. The inclusion of his name in the narrative results from the influence of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* tradition and the so-called *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*. The author of the *Iskandarnāma* mentions the *Legends of the Prophets* as one of his main sources for the compilation of the narrative.[95] Given that Solomon is one of the protagonists, if not the main one, in Islamic lore,[96] his role in the *Iskandarnāma* is understandable. Interestingly enough, Solomon exists in the *Iskandarnāma* rather as a name and legend than an actual personality. The purpose of the use of Solomon's name in the narrative is closely associated with the way that his name is combined with the figure and action of the protagonist Alexander. In technical terms Solomon's name is used in two functions; first, Alexander fully replaces Solomon in a story classically associated with the latter (leading

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[92] *IN*, 204:3-4. The Prophet Elias is one of the most well-known religious figures in the Biblical and Islamic tradition. He is mentioned in the *Qur'ān* (37:123-132) and has become a basic protagonist in the Islamic *Legends of the Prophets* (*Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*). He is the nineteenth in the chain of prophets in the Judeo-Islamic tradition. See Knappert, *op.cit.*, 7-10.

[93] Ibid., 9.

[94] Although Khiḍr in the *Iskandarnāma* appears to be acting on his own, it is common in Islamic lore for him to appear along with Elias, both of them sent by God, to accomplish a task. See *QA*, 338-342.

[95] *IN*, 352:14.

[96] Several stages and episodes of Solomon's life have entered the legendary cycle: the way he became king, Solomon and his servants, the flying carpet, the Queen of Abyssinia, the Queen of Sheba, Solomon and the Ants and others. See Knappert, *op.cit.*, 129.

to the equation of the two figures), second, Alexander's actions and behaviour appear as similar or comparable to those of Solomon (leading to the comparison of the two figures, even Alexander's identification with Solomon).

Regarding the first function, the equation between Alexander and Solomon, the story of the Caspian Sea is quite striking.[97] After having visited the Land of Darkness, Alexander embarks on exploring *daryā-yi akhzar*, the Caspian Sea in historical terms[98]. The hero meets a 640 year old man who informs Alexander about his risky trip on the Caspian Sea. This is a "vast" and "boundless sea". In fact, "there is none bigger in the world".[99] The only person in the past who managed was Solomon who crossed the sea not by ship but carried on the back of the wind.[100] Alexander is ready to undertake this impossible task. The old man copies for Alexander the thirty names of God so as to be protected during his voyage and be successful. During his trip, while the ship is anchored and Alexander is sitting on deck, an enormous fish emerges from the sea making Alexander marvel at it. It is so big that it can eat the whole ship and the entire army of Alexander.[101] Then, a dialogue between him and the fish takes place. The hero asks the fish about its size and the beast narrates to him the story of Solomon who fed all animals.[102] After the conclusions of their dialogue, the fish disappears into the sea and the narrative moves on with Alexander crossing the vast sea and surpassing Solomon's deed.

In this episode, the association of Alexander and Solomon is more than obvious. The same episode is taken by the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition and is a precise copy of Solomon's dialogue with the gigantic fish.[103] Alexander appears following Solomon's path and deeds. In fact, he has similar qualities. He is the chosen one to revive Solomon's magnificence and he has the ability to know the language of the fish, an exclusive privilege of Solomon. However, Alexander's ability results from the recitation of God's name and not by any magic ring as in Solomon's case.[104] Alexander in this episode appears as the New Solomon who comes to surpass the older Solomon: he

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[97] *IN*, 215; 218:14.
[98] Southgate wrongly translates it as the Green Sea or the Indian Ocean, 210, n. 43. See also p.81, n. 32.
[99] *IN*, 216:18.
[100] Ibid., 216:16.
[101] Ibid., 218:16.
[102] Ibid., 219:5-10; *QA*, 287; Knappert, *op.cit.*, 133-134.
[103] *QA*, 286-287.
[104] Ibid., 287; Knappert, *op.cit.*, 130.

crosses the Caspian Sea not carried on the back of the wind but by ship. He does not use the help of the natural element (wind) but he makes use of his human resources and technology (ship). God is on his side. In this sense, Alexander is equated with Solomon and this equation legitimizes his profile as a Muslim prophet in the monotheistic tradition of the Middle East.

If the above story suggests an equation between the prophetic statures of Alexander and Solomon, due to the replacement of the latter by the former, the story of Fairyland suggests the same phenomenon, equation, through, this time, the identification of Alexander's future wife Arāqīt (the Queen of fairies) with the Queen of Sheba (Solomon's wife).[105] Southgate correctly mentions that Arāqīt`s portrait owes much to the portrait of the Queen of Sheba, as she is described in the legendary cycle of Solomon.[106] And indeed, Arāqīt in the *Iskandarnāma* is a new Queen of Sheba, this time in a new environment, the Islamic tradition. In the narrative Arāqīt is presented descending from a human mother, *"just like Bilqīs"*, the Queen of Sheba[107] and the maiden points out to Alexander that only her upper half is fair and beautiful. Her feet and her legs are hairy like a beast's,[108] classic features of the Queen of Sheba in the *Isrā'īliyyāt* tradition.[109] Thus by presenting Arāqīt with striking features of the Queen of Sheba, who is clearly mentioned in the narrative, there is an obvious fusing process between the two legendary traditions in Islamic Iran, that of Alexander and Solomon. Moreover, Arāqīt`s identification with the Queen of Sheba contributes catalytically to the identification of Alexander with Solomon.

With regard to the second function, the comparison of Alexander with the figure and the skills of Solomon, the story relating to Alexander`s visit to Fairyland are quite revealing.[110] When Alexander and his army approach Fairyland (only four parasangs away), he orders the army to encamp there the first night so as to rest. Alexander, then, uses his supernatural skills; he takes the name of God and other talismans and then draws the Magic Circle (*Mandhal*). The Magic Circle has supernatural applications, protecting

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[105] *QA*, 301; Knappert, *op.cit.*, 138-145.
[106] Southgate, 210-211, n. 59.
[107] *IN*, 364:13.
[108] Ibid., 367:21-368:1.
[109] *QA*, 302; L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols., (Philadelphia, 1925-1947), 4:138-141.
[110] *IN*, 354-384.

Alexander and his army from any assault and evil intention of their enemies.[111] Thus, when the fairies attempt to attack Alexander`s camp, they fail.[112] This supernatural power of Alexander makes them wonder *"Is it Solomon, may peace be upon Him, who has returned again to life and has drawn Solomon's Magic Circle?"*.[113] Later on, when he orders his army to move towards Fairyland, her scouts report to Arāqīt that *"No king has had power over the fairies since Solomon's time, may peace be upon Him"*.[114] Elsewhere, *Alexander Solomon* draws the curiosity, attention, respect and admiration of his enemies. When the story of Fairyland has been developed, the fairies make an alliance with the demons (dīvs). When the latter are invited by the Fairies to face Alexander`s army, their chief is curious and eager to meet Alexander: *"We had to come to this place to see this man, because he is like Solomon."*[115]

Obviously, the comparison of Alexander to Solomon in these quotations presents both figures as equal. Solomon, although belonging to the past, thus having the advantage of time as a towering monarchic and prophetic figure, is equated to Alexander who appears as the former's incarnation or successor in the present. But this comparison is not restricted to the equality of the two figures. In fact, Alexander's current deeds make his opponents kneel in front of his majesty and consider him even greater than Solomon. The chief of Dīvs admits that *"He has been to the Land of Darkness and then he came out. Solomon with all his glory did not go to the Land of Darkness"*.[116] This implication regarding Alexander's superiority before the div meets the hero is turned to a direct recognition of this superiority after they meet each other: *"This man is above Solomon, who was a Prophet of God"*.[117] The recognition of Alexander`s superiority is apparently based on his achievements.

Besides the above two functions Solomon's name is used elsewhere in the narrative in several ways. Due to his importance as Prophet and king in Islamic lore, Solomon's name is sometimes used as a chronological point in the *Iskandarnāma*: for

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[111] *IN*, 354:10-11.
[112] *IN*, 354:11.
[113] " ***مگر سلیمان علیه السلام زنده شده است که خط منزل سلیمان کشیدی...*** ", *IN*, 354:12-13. The fairies are afraid of Solomon in the legendary tradition of the Prophets. See *QA*, 297-298.
[114] " ***از روزگار سلیمان علیه السلام باز هیچ پادشاه را بر پریان دست نبود.*** ...", *IN*, 355:3-4.
[115] "***مارا خود بدین جای بایست آمدن که این مرد چون سلیمانست***", Ibid., 377:20-21.
[116] " ***در ظلمات رفته است و بیرون آمده و سلیمان مع جلال قدره در ظلمات نرفت، ...***", ibid., 377:21-378:22.
[117] "...این مرد از سلیمان فزونترست که پیغمبر خدا بود.", ibid., 379:9-10.

example, in the case of the old man counting the prophets who passed from this world,[118] the chronological definition of the foundation of the city in China[119] and Zubayda`s cloister.[120] Elsewhere, Solomon is used in connection with didactic elements such as wisdom and one could enlist the inserted story of "the man who spoke truthfully" in the episode of Alexander's visit to China. When Alexander is surrounded by several Chinese sages hearing several anecdotes, he asks to hear a story about women and their foolishness. Then he asks to hear an entertaining story and one of the Chinese wise men narrates to him the story of a man who wanted to comprehend the tongue of the animals.[121] This man asks his friend king Solomon that he be granted this gift. Solomon requests from God the right to grant this gift to the man and Gabriel on behalf of the Divine answered positively. Then Solomon grants him this gift provided that he will not reveal this secret to any other human. If he does so, he will die.[122] The man accepts the condition. The story goes on and the curious man hears the dialogue between an ox and a donkey. The man laughs at what he hears and his wife asks him the reason for this. The man finds himself in difficulty because he cannot hide the truth (he is truthful) but on the other hand, if he does so he will die. The solution comes from the man's own animals. A cock resolves the problem by saying to the hens that their master has no sense of honor and he should treat his wife in a manlike way.[123]

This story is a classic example of the *Isrā'īliyyāt* influence upon the *Iskandarnāma* and Islamic lore in general. It constitutes a part of Solomon's legendary cycle in the Jewish tradition[124] and is a subdivision of legends dealing with Solomon's ability to comprehend and speak the language of the animals.[125] Solomon appears as an introductory figure in this inserted story of the *Iskandarnāma*. He is requested to grant the gift of the comprehension of the animals' language because he is the only human in the world who has been entrusted by God with this privilege. Although Solomon appears only at the beginning, his presence in the narrative is sufficient to remind the reader of

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[118] Ibid., 380:6.
[119] Ibid., 250:7-8; Southgate, 66.
[120] *IN*, 637:1.
[121] Ibid., 279.
[122] Ibid., 281:6-8.
[123] Ibid., 284:20-285:16.
[124] Ginzberg, *op.cit.*, 4:145.
[125] Knappert, *op.cit.*, 130.

the *Iskandarnāma* of his association with Alexander or vice versa. Since this story is a secondary one,[126] its role is unnecessary for the narrative and the development of the plot. Nevertheless, this story is really important for boosting Alexander's Muslim profile, if it is associated with the remainder of the references to Solomon in the *Iskandarnāma*. It acts as a reminder that the prominent prophetic figure of Solomon is alive in the *Iskandarnāma* and he acts in the background of the plot. In the foreground, Alexander is the protagonist.

Apart from the above arguments, one can detect the reflection of Solomon's tradition in Alexander's character. His piety, the magic means he employs, mainly the presence of the angel-guard and his goals are identified, partially, with Solomon's personality and tradition. The towering feature of all is their desire for universal power.

In many cases in the narrative, Alexander performs his prayers[127] and numerous times addresses God expressing to Him gratitude and praising Him for several reasons; the secrets of the world, the protection and benevolence that he enjoys from God. The same model of piety is met in Solomon's case. Solomon prays to God for seventy nights, requesting from God to have his kingdom expanded.[128]

Piety, however, as a fundamental aspect of Alexander's behaviour is used in combination with his primary goal, to expand Islam, find the Water of Life and, therefore, acquire universal domination. Solomon's behaviour is one and the same in the tradition of the Prophets. Solomon prays for seventy nights begging that God enable him to have power over the fairies. He prayed for more power over the birds and animals, the giants, the waters and the winds.[129] Thus the aims of Alexander and Solomon are identical. But how is the communication between the hero and the divine materialized every time?

Divine intervention is an important motif in the *Iskandarnāma* and is expressed through the occasional and momentous presence of angels. The mission of angels is to help Alexander overcome the obstacles he encounters in the long process of his campaign. Sometimes, they appear unexpectedly and at other times after Alexander's

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[126] Rubanovich, 'Reconstruction', 219.
[127] *IN*, 543:7-9; 362:11-13.
[128] *QA*, 281-283.
[129] Ibid., 281; Prayers is the only means to master the four spirits, see Knappert, *op.cit.*, 131.

invocation but most of the time in Alexander's dreams.[130] Their aim is to give strength and hope for the difficulties lying ahead or admonish him. When Alexander feels that he has accomplished much, an angel appears in his dream telling him that he has been deceived, if he thinks that all he has achieved is due to his own knowledge and wisdom.[131] Elsewhere angels of their volition ask God that they might become Alexander's companions and pray with him.[132] The role of angels as companions of the Prophets is a well-known motif in the Biblical tradition. In Islamic lore, however, it is mostly Solomon who enjoys this privilege more than any other prophet. Thus, given that Solomon is the predominant prophetic figure, it must be assumed that the motif of the angel-adviser-guard is strongly associated with the influence of the legendary tradition of Solomon in the *Iskandarnāma*.

The general spirit in the *Iskandarnāma* presents Alexander as equal to Solomon. Another common point between the two figures is that God in both cases grants them what they have been asked, except for immortality. The figure of Solomon appears as the model of *prophet king*, a model that the figure of Alexander adopts in the narrative. Alexander is an earthly king who has become a legendary prophet, as occurred in the case of Solomon. Either through comparison or identification, Alexander appears as the New Solomon who may even be superior to the Old One. He is the chosen one by God. The Dīv's statement that Alexander is above Solomon may be interpreted as an exaggeration of admiration resulting from Alexander's extraordinary deeds. It also reflects the will of the narrative to promote Alexander's superiority over Solomon, the ideal model of comparison. Thus *Iskandarnāma* must be credited as the first and perhaps only Persian account, integrating Alexander's image into Islamic lore as a major Muslim prophetic figure.

In sum, it is the aim of this chapter to show the Muslim profile of Alexander in the narrative by analyzing all the details leading towards this conclusion. The notions of the *double-horned one*, the Muslim world conqueror as well the rich material of Islamic lore (holy places and legendary figures and prophets) in the narrative, denote the Muslim

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[130] *IN*, 412:13; 471:12-14.
[131] Ibid., 215: 4-15.
[132] Ibid., 307-312.

profile of Alexander. Due to its literary sources (*Qisas al-anbiyā'*[133] and others) and oral background, the *Iskandarnāma* must be seen as an inseparable part of the literary tradition for *Alexander dhu'l-qarnayn* in Islamic Iran and it is unique in presenting Alexander as a Muslim heroic figure in the Islamic tradition. Sharing some common aspects with that of the *Shāhnāma*, Alexander is a symbol who personifies the ideals of youth and beauty in the form of the ideal Muslim king.[134] He must be seen as a part of the long chain of divinely protected kings in Muslim history, a king who lived in pre-Islamic times and contributed to the preservation of divine order on earth.

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[133] Ibid., 321-333.
[134] Kappler, 'Alexandre le Grand en littérature persane classique', 29-30.

Second Part: Literary Themes

I. Time and Fate

i. The Zoroastrian and Islamic traditions-the *Shāhnāma*

Time (or Fate, Destiny) is the foundation on which the action of the *Iskandarnāma,* and every romance, is based.[1] The act of Time traps the hero in his endeavours to accomplish the goals that he has planned. Alexander's concept of life is closely associated with the pre-Islamic and Islamic concepts of time, fate and the role of the Divine in Iran. This chapter aims to analyse Time as a reflection of predestination in the *Iskandarnāma* so as to shed light on the ideas and motives of the hero's action. In particular, it aims to approach the practical manifestations of time in the narrative (the several moments of day and night, the succession of days and the like). Then there is an attempt to examine the theoretical aspects of Time in the narrative: first, the meaning of Time as destiny and its association with the sky and astrology, second, the relation between God and Time and third, the hero's attitude to these superhuman forces. Moreover, it is within the objectives of this chapter to prove that pre-Islamic and Islamic notions of time coexist in the narrative. In order to interpret these ideas in the *Iskandarnāma*, it is important to go back to the pre-Islamic Iranian concept of time and then to present briefly the issue of time and fate in Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, which has influenced the *Iskandarnāma*.

With regard to the pre-Islamic Iranian conceptions of Time and Destiny, their identification with predestination and a superhuman power is often traced in the religious literature of the Zoroastrians. The Pahlavi term for time is *Zamān* (or *Zamānak*) and is symbolized by Zurvān, the supreme anthropomorphic deity and the one who determines destiny.[2] Predestination is fundamental in Zoroastrian literature. It is invincible, it reflects good and evil, and, being all-powerful and all-pervasive, it excludes every possibility of

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[1] M.W. Bloomfield, 'Episodic Motivation and Marvels in Epic and Romance', in *Essays and Explorations: Studies in Ideas, Language and Literature, ed.* M.W. Bloomfield (Cambridge Mass., 1970), 103.
[2] Ringgren, 23-24. For the figure of Zurvān, see R. Zaehner, *Zurvān: A Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford, 1955).

human beings having any part to play in defining their destiny.[3] According to Nyberg, Destiny consists of three levels: first, *bakhsh* or predestination, which is the initial definition of the lot falling to each human; second, Zamānak, the moment during which the pre-defined virtual lot becomes actual; third, *vicīr i brīn*, the full accomplishment of predestination. These three levels form Destiny being identical with God-Time Zurvān.[4] In the *Dēnkart*, Time-Fate has two natures: good (*Spēnāk*) and evil-destructive (*Ganā*), both of which are inexorably interwoven.[5] In the current age the evil nature prevails but the good nature will be the ultimate winner at the end of this age.[6] In Zoroastrianism Time is stronger than the two creations (good and evil) and will be endless after 12,000 years.[7]

Another aspect of destiny in Old Iranian terms is its association with the sky ("Heaven"). In the *Bundahishn*, Heaven is the one who distributes good things to humans through Time (*zamān*). What is assigned to humans through the distribution of Heaven becomes a reality to men through the passing of Time.[8] But if Time-Destiny is identified with Heaven, what is the extent of time, if it there is any, and its limits?

In the *Dēnkart*, it is stated that *"Time was originally limitless, then it was forced to be limited but at the end it will return to limitlessness"*.[9] The limited or unlimited character of Time is associated with the issue of Creation. Before Creation, Time was unlimited, after the act of Creation by the Divine, Time was limited and this condition will remain until the Rejuvenation.[10] Thus, creation happens within restricted time. The events taking place in this world result from the temporal consequence of creation. Time is necessary for the existence of Creation and even Āhūrā Mazdā depends upon Time.[11] Hence, the Zoroastrian tradition as analysed above gives a stimulating background to the concept of time and destiny in pre-Islamic Iran.

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[3] *Dānāk-u Mainyō-i Khrad*, ed. T.D. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1913), 27, 10; *Mainyō-i Khard*, ed. and trans. E.W. West (Stuttgart-London, 1871), 31; Ringgren, 24.
[4] H.S. Nyberg, 'Questions de cosmogonie et de cosmologie mazdéenes', *JA,* 219 (1931), 54.
[5] The Pahlavi *Dēnkart*, ed. D.M. Madan 2 vols. (Bombay, 1911), 21, 15 cited in Ringgren, 25.
[6] Ringgren rightly mentions that this monistic view does not agree with the dualism of Zurvanism in the *Mainyō-i Khard*. See Ringgren, 26.
[7] Ibid., 27.
[8] *Bundahishn,* 166.
[9] Ringgren, 32.
[10] *Dēnkart,* 290 l.8; Ringgren, 31-32.
[11] Ringgren, 32.

This tradition was preserved after the advent of Islam in Iran. The eternal question of mankind about the reason and aim of its existence is intimately associated with ideas such as the Divine, Destiny and Time. The new Faith of Islam gave answers to these questions but the above queries carried on troubling human logic and curiosity. This quest for knowledge is reflected in the struggle between the Jabriyya and the Qadariyya (early eighth century AD). The former supported the idea that predestination (Ar. *qadar*) is absolute determinism in every aspect, ethical, spiritual and physical. Defenders of the Divine omnipotence argued that any effort by the individual is in vain because God has, in advance, prescribed his destiny.[12] The Qadariyya, on the other hand, were supporters of *'Free Will'* in Islamic thought and they did not accept the idea of predestination. They proclaimed individual responsibility of humans for their acts, due to the ability of the individual to choose between good and evil.[13] The interpretations of the Qadariyya were supported later by the Khārijites, reflecting the constant intellectual search of the Muslim world concerning the eternal issue of Time, Predestination and God.

Bearing in mind the above developments in the pre-Islamic and Islamic contexts related to the issue of Time and Destiny, it is necessary now to turn to the *Shāhnāma*. The selection of this text as a tool for the introductory examination of pre-Islamic and Islamic notions of Time is due first to the fact that Firdawsī incorporated both Zoroastrian and Islamic notions into his poem, and second, that his work influenced the *Iskandarnāma*. The *Shāhnāma* is the first and only preserved account that combines both trends (pre-Islamic and Islamic) of Iranian religious thought.

Time in the *Shāhnāma* is attested as *"zamān"*, *"zamānak"* and *"rūzigār"*.[14] It is identified with Destiny and Fate and it has both faces: good and evil. Cyclical or linear Time can be benevolent to the hero or destroy him. The idea of predestination is predominant in the *Shāhnāma*: when one's time is accomplished, then (s)he should die.[15] Predestination does not have a clear face and the Zoroastrian dualistic concept is striking. Destiny is unstable and, hence, is more dangerous and painful to man. It can honour and humiliate, sometimes is bitter and at other times sweet. The dual face of Destiny

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[12] J. Obermann, 'Political Theology in Early Islam', *JAOS*, 55 (1935), 145-146.
[13] J. van Ess, 'Kadariyya', *EI*^{2}, 4, 368-372. The Qadariyya were persecuted by the Umayyads as heretics, accused of posing a threat to the political apparatus of that time.
[14] Ringgren, 9.
[15] Ibid., 10.

guarantees success and failure, happiness and misery. Another aspect of Time is its unpredictable nature. Nobody knows what destiny has in mind for any individual.[16] Moreover, Fate is overpowering and nobody can escape its grasp. Its power deals with the inescapable portion of humans to succumb to death. Since Fate is unavoidable, humans must yield to its power. Any other thought seems meaningless.[17] Destiny has its own course and it is inexorable in spite of any attempt of man to change it. In other cases, it appears as the guardian of morals, rewarding good deeds or taking revenge for shameful acts. Fate, either honey or poison, is mainly an enemy or at most an unsafe potential friend for man.

The above brief description of Time in the *Shāhnāma* focuses mainly on Time as Destiny and serves as an introductory basis for the discussion of the same theme in the *Iskandarnāma* by comparing the association of Time with the Sky, the role of God and the attitude of the hero towards Destiny.

II. The *Iskandarnāma*

The role of Time in the *Iskandarnāma* is quite a stimulating issue due both to the popular and simple style of the text and the time of its compilation. The role of Time in a compilation of legends can reveal unknown aspects of the popular concept of Time in eleventh-century Iran. Time, along with Place, are the most basic elements for the development of a narrative. In the *Iskandarnāma,* both Time and Place are uncertain. The current chapter aims to define the nature and role of Time in the narrative. In particular, it analyzes the practical, and relatively simple, dimension of Time for the narrative. Then the analysis focuses on the examination of the theoretical aspects of Time (The nature of Time, its association with the Sky, the attitude of the hero and the role of the Divine).

Concerning the practical dimension of Time, the action does not take place in a historically defined period. Time in sagas is used as an invisible frame having no historical importance but serving the promotion of the plot. Chronological systems are meaningless in this case, because the whole story is without a precise chronological

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[16] Ibid., 15.
[17] Ibid.

framework. The audience and the reader are not so interested in hearing historical details about, for example, when exactly Alexander campaigned against Iran. Instead, they are interested in the entertaining, and didactic, aspect of the narration. For the name of the Persian King Dārāb (Darius III) is used not only as a personal detail about the adversary of Alexander but also as a geographical, chronological and moral device (the declined king of Iran who lost his *farr*).[18] After all, Time for the reader is relevant. The actions of the hero are what matters. Similarly, the author uses several historical names of individuals, such as Sulṭān Maḥmūd,[19] Wahb b. Munabbih,[20] Shaykh Abū Sa'īd Khargūshī[21] and others. Similarly, by mentioning his sources, such as the *Shāhnāma*,[22] *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*,[23] *Siyar al-mulūk*[24] and others that he used for the compilation of the narrative, the author gives the reader a glimpse of the historical-literary background of the text.

However, the above sources of a definition of Time are basically not relevant to the narrative. For this reason a variety of motifs and devices are used to reflect the evolution of Time in the narrative. Apart from exceptional cases in which Time is precisely defined,[25] Time in the narrative is abstract and non-specific. The first motif is the use of prayers. These act as a chronological device defining the particular point of the day during which the plot takes place.[26] But prayers are nevertheless an inventive way of defining time during the day.

Another motif includes a variety of terms denoting time (day, night, month). Time in the plot is defined mainly by the notion of physical light and darkness. The term "Day (=rūz)" is one of the predominant terms for the practical expression of Time during the prevalence of light in the sky. Abstract use of the term *day* is common, such as *"one*

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[18] *IN*, 7-12.
[19] Ibid., 218:5-9.
[20] Ibid., 219:10.
[21] Ibid., 218:6.
[22] Ibid., 249:12, 240:20.
[23] Ibid., 251:11.
[24] Ibid., 240:20.
[25] See the case of hour: "ساعتی بر آمد", (*An hour passed)*, (ibid., 415:7).
[26] "تا نماز دگر چون وقت فرو شدن آفتاب بود", *(until the next prayer, when the sun set,...)*, ibid., 92:3; "چون نماز دگر بکردند و روز به آخر رسیدن آمد...", *(when they carried out the next prayer, and the day was reaching its end...)*, ibid., 285:15.

day",[27] *"the next day"*,[28] *"Then on that day"*,[29] *"Then a few days passed...,"*.[30] Day is also used in a specific way: *"Then, on the fourth day"*.[31]

The light of day is succeeded by the darkness of night through several motif-expressions: *One night*,[32] *"That night"*,[33] *"the second night"*,[34] *"and it was night"*,[35] *"When night came"*,[36] *"she chose the time of rest and sleep..."*.[37] But the darkness of night does not last for ever and the expressions used for this reason are indicative: *"when day came and the glorious sun came"*.[38] "And Alexander saw the sun and the face of the sun that day",[39] "*When day came and it grew light*",[40] "*when the day grew bright*".[41]

Apart from the term *"day"*, other terms, such as that of *week* (*hafta*) and *month (māh)*, are used to express a wider time-frame. Some common applications of this term are the following: "*During this week*",[42] "*They were walking day and night for a month*",[43] "*(he) spent a period of for four months*",[44] "*and when four months were completed*".[45]

Apart from the above terms, the concept of Time in the narrative is also manifested by a third factor, the geographical context of the narrative. In particular, the development of Alexander's campaign through the change of geographical environments acts as an indirect indication of the advancement of Time. Alexander's route in the narrative is not linear in terms of geography. He embarks from Greece (Rūm), heading

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[27] "یک روز", ibid., 87:14.
[28] "روز دیگر" or "دیگر روز", ibid., 22:7; 110:20.
[29] "پس ان روز", ibid., 359:14.
[30] "پس چند روز بر آمد", ibid., 26:9.
[31] "پس روز چهارم", ibid., 702:8.
[32] "شبی", ibid., 211:21; 218:14.
[33] "آن شب", ibid., 32:11.
[34] "شب دوم", ibid., 693:15.
[35] "و شب بود", ibid., 694:5.
[36] "چون شب در آمد", ibid., 196:9.
[37] "پس قیذافه وقت آرام و خواب بر خاست", ibid., 195:6.
[38] "چون روز شد آفتاب نیک بر آمد", ibid., 93:3.
[39] "و اسکندر آفتاب و صورت آفتاب را ان روز بدید", ibid., 211:1.
[40] "چون روز بر آمد و هوا منوور شد", ibid., 358:1.
[41] "پس چون روز روشان شد", ibid., 352:4.
[42] "در این هفته", ibid., 432:12.
[43] "ماهی روز و شب می رفتند", ibid., 87:18.
[44] "در چین مدت چهار ماه مقام کرد", ibid., 270:8.
[45] "و چون چهار ماه تمام شد...", ibid., 408:6.

eastwards against Iran. After Dārāb's defeat, Alexander goes southwestwards to the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt, after he first visits Kashmīr. It is after his trip to the Land of Darkness that Alexander moves exclusively northeastwards through the Akhzar Sea (Caspian Sea) to Central Asia.[46] Distance during the campaign is counted in *parasangs (farsang).*[47] Alexander's route symbolizes the advancement of *dār al-Islām* over *dār al-ḥarb* and the ultimate defeat of the latter. Thus, through the successful advancement of Alexander's army, there is implicit in the narrative a linear concept of Time, coexisting with the non-linear concept of geography.

Another factor contributing to the definition of Time in the *Iskandarnāma* is the reference to the Iranian legendary kings of the pre-Islamic past and the Prophets of the Islamic tradition. Concerning the legendary royal Iranian past, there are many references to Kay-Khusraw,[48] Jamshīd[49] and to Ḍaḥḥāk, the eternal Arab enemy of Iran[50] as well as *Afrāsiyāb*, the Turkish arch-foe of Iran.[51] The legendary Iranian tradition of kings coexists in the narrative with the *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'* tradition. Aaron, Moses, David, Solomon, Khiḍr, Elias[52] are some of the prophets mentioned in the narrative. The coexistence of the pre-Islamic tradition of kings and the Islamic tradition of Prophets reflects the dual cultural character of the *Iskandarnāma*, as a Persian account with a strong Islamic character.[53] The reference to both aspects of the past, the pre-Islamic and Islamic, promotes another concept of Time, placing Alexander and his campaign in the spectrum of history in an abstract way. He is the hero who is roaming from the early legendary past of Iran to the very present of Islamic expansion in Central Asia.

What is striking about the definition of Time in the narrative is the constant reference to the remaining days of Alexander's life. In fact, this is the key issue for the interpretation of the role of Time in the narrative. Alexander appears on many occasions asking with fear and anxiety about how many days of his life are left. For example, he asks Aristotle about the precise length of the remaining days of his life: "*Calculate*

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[46] Ibid., 221.
[47] Ibid., 25:6; 417:11; a Persian unit of measure of distance equal to 5,919 meters.
[48] Ibid., 200:19; Southgate, 54.
[49] *IN*, 380:7.
[50] Ibid., 380:8.
[51] Ibid., 201:11.
[52] Ibid., 216:10-16.
[53] Babayan, *Mystics, Monarchs and Messiahs*, 25.

again: how many months are thirty six years?",[54] or in the Fairyland he is frustrated: "*...from a total of fourteen years seven years passed and yet I have not explored have half of the world*".[55] His fear that death will take him by surprise is constant in the narrative.[56] Thus, through the counting of the remaining days of Alexander's life-time, the narrative tells the reader in an inventive way about the development and the extent of the plot, creating implicitly the feeling of a linear approach of events to the reader. Alexander's attitude towards death is also important for the interpretation of the theoretical dimensions of Time below.[57]

Time as a theoretical device in the narrative

The nature of Time

In order to define the nature of Time in the *Iskandarnāma*, it is important to examine whether Time is used as a chronological device for dating the succession of events and the evolution of the plot or it has a more personal and powerful dimension, exceeding human power. The following pages aim to prove that Time in the narrative is a neutral impersonal machine which has its own rules and restricts the actions and choices of the heroes. In fact, it is shown that predestination is the main aspect of Time in the *Iskandarnāma*.

Time in the narrative is attested in three words, the Arabic *waqt*, *muddat* (= time) and the Persian *rūzigār* (time, destiny/fate). *Waqt* in Arabic expresses the general concept of Time but in the *Iskandarnāma* it is used only to express the daily and practical use of time.[58] Similarly, *muddat* has a typically quantitative nature and is used to define the extent and quantity of an action. For example, "*And Alexander stayed in Iran for a*

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[54] "حساب باز کن تا سی و شش سال چند ماه باشد ؟", *IN*, 470:21-471:3.

[55] "از جمله چهارده سال هفت سال برفت و من هنوز یک نیم از جهان نگردیده ام.", *IN*, 98:7-8.

[56] Ibid., 702:4-5.

[57] The issue of death is also important in Niẓāmī's account in a pure philosophic way. See A.L. Beelaert, 'Alexandre dans le discours sur les âges de la vie dans l'Iskandar-nāmā de Niẓāmī', in L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*, 250-252.

[58] *IN*, *195:6.*

period of five months... ".[59] The quantitative nature of *muddat* in the narrative is attested in several other cases of the narrative.[60] This character of *muddat* makes it a standard device to express simply quantity of Time without any theoretical insights about either the nature of Time or its relation to the events of the narrative.

However, this is not the case for the term *rūzigār* which has a dual meaning and usage in the narrative. On the one hand, as *muddat*, it is used to define in practical terms a general period. On the other hand, it represents a superhuman power, Destiny (Fate), which restricts the hero's freedom in his lifetime. The latter aspect, however, is not so obviously expressed and the reader gains the impression that *rūzigār* is used to define the period and quantitative nature of Time. The analysis below aims to support and justify the idea that *rūzigār* represents Destiny. This is a vital aspect in the world concept of the hero about the content of the earthly life and its interaction with the supernatural powers.

Rūzigār is found in the narrative in two forms: first, forming four compound verbal forms and second, as a noun, with or without preposition, personifying Time. With regard to the first, *rūzigār* in the compound verbal forms is attested as *rūzigār burdan* (= to waste time),[61] *rūzigār raftan* (= there is no time left),[62] *rūzigār yaftan* (= time elapses)[63] and *rūzigār guzarānīdan* (= spend a lifetime).[64] These expressions reflect the fundamental role of Time in several moments of Alexander's campaign. It is always Time in the subconscious of the hero that dictates the urgent character of each endeavour

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[59] "*و شاه اسکندر مدت پنج ماه در ایران بماند*... ", ibid., 11:18.

[60] For example see ibid., 470:9.

[61] Ibid., 331:15 [The Sage (Aristotle): *ای شاها روزگار بردن سواب نباشد* = *O, king, we must not waste time*"], ibid., 335:19; (*پس شاه فرمود که ای زود باشید و روزگار مبرید* = *then the king ordered, "act quickly and do not waste time"*).

[62] Ibid., 245:22-246:1 (*ایشان در قلعه در بندند وروزگار برود تا این قلعه بستانم* = *they have fortified themselves in that fort and it will take a lifetime to subdue this fort* ...); ibid., 253:19 (*مارا در این شهر گفتند رسم ما بیاورید که روزگاربرفت* = *we have wasted our time in this city*); ibid., 322:9-10 (*روزگار برفت* = *introduce us [to the king] because we have no time*); ibid., 331:20 (*امروز به (زیر قلعه) آیید تا جنگ کنیم که روزگار برفت*... = *come to the fort today to fight because we have run out of time*); ibid., 360:17 (*فردا جنگ را بساز که روزگار برفت*... = ..., *get prepared for warfare tomorrow, because there is no time left*); ibid., 456:3 (*شاه گفت مارا روزگار برفت* = *the king said, "there is no time left for us"*); ibid., 456:4 (*روزگار آنکه برود*... = *even if there is not time,*); ibid., 466:17, 753:6 (*که روزگار برفت*... = *because there is no time left).*

[63] Ibid., 345:10 (*پیری بود روزگار یافته و دو تا شده* = *he was old, time had passed and his body had become humpbacked*).

[64] Ibid., 509:12-13 (*و در پیش حکیم می بود و روزگار می گزرانید*...) = *and he was in the service of the sage and life went on).*

for the accomplishment of a task. Obviously the use of the above compound verbal forms of *rūzigār* gives mainly a practical dimension to Time, just as *muddat* does. But is this practical aspect the only function of *rūzigār*? There are certain examples indicating that *rūzigār* has a more essential role in the narrative. The examples below show that *rūzigār* displays a personified aspect of Time. This aspect is not obvious at first sight, and is not a simple grammatical form.

The latter notion is partially traced in the usage of the term *rūzigār* as a personified noun (second form above). *Rūzigār* plays a vital role: "*During this period Alexander came to life and he conquered the whole world and ...*";[65] elsewhere Alexander states that "*we have wasted all of our time in this city and we must use all of our time in order to go to the East*".[66] Some other examples denote almost the same usage of the term.[67] Apparently, in these examples, *rūzigār* has a more active participation in the plot. It constantly reminds Alexander to hurry up and move forwards to accomplish his goals. In fact, Alexander puts up a continuous fight against Time. He attempts to move forward rapidly and conquer non-Muslim countries as soon as possible. He gives the impression that an invisible hand or power fatally threatens him at every single moment. The fear of death and total failure is an untrustworthy companion in Alexander's campaign. But why is that so?

The answer to this lies in the concept of predestination. From the very beginning of his campaign and throughout the narrative Alexander is influenced by fear of his death. For an unexplained reason, Alexander is certain that he is going to die sooner than other men. This is a common secret in the narrative. Everybody knows it but nobody, except for Alexander himself, dares mention it. Alexander's tragic character in the *Iskandarnāma* is that he is fighting an ongoing battle against a superior opponent, Time. The latter's manifestation in the narrative is fear of death. Time is nowhere, it cannot be seen, but it exists. Time does not dwell among the humans but it deals with them,

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[65] Ibid., 757:11 (*پس در این روزگار اسکندر پدیدار آمد و همه جهان بر گشاد و ...*). For Solomon's time, see ibid., 279:21-280-1.

[66] Ibid., 253:19-20 (*مارا در این شهر روزگار برفت و مارا روزگاری تمام به کار باید تا ما به جانب مشرق رویم*.

[67] Ibid., 98:6 (*و باندکه روزگار به جانب هندوستان آمد...* = *...and in a short time he came to India*); ibid., 98:7 *گفت روزگار دراز شد و از جمله چهارده سال هفت سال برفت و من هنوز نیم از جهان نگردیده ام [اسکندر]...* = *[Alexander] said that time has been lengthened and so far seven years out of fourteen have passed and I have still not seen not even a half of the world...*).

eventually. Death is the ultimate manifestation of Time, something from which no one can escape.

Hence, Time as a power of predestination reveals its antihuman face, in this case, through Death. The first death in the narrative is that of Dārāb and it is here that the notion of predestination is manifested: "(Dārāb:) *Know that this was my lot and the will of God*".[68] Here, Time as Destiny is expressed through the expression *"kār-i man"*. It is Destiny that decides Dārāb's death and his succession by Alexander. It is the supernatural power which is unpredictable and uncontrollable. As shown below, Time and God are not identified. Elsewhere the notion of predestination is clearly reflected in the angel's response to Alexander's complaint: During his war against Arslānkhān, Alexander worries about the time remaining of his life. He says to the Angel that: *"You had told me that it is a task of no more than five months. Four months have passed now, and if he (Arslānkhān) enters the fort; our task will become difficult and will take longer"*.[69] Then the angel said: *"The issue of Arslānkhān will end in two or three days, for two or three nights remain before you conquer the city"*.[70]

It is important to stress that the Persian term *rūzigār* is closely associated with Fate and predestination in medieval Persian literature.[71] Hence, this is another important factor for interpreting *rūzigār* not simply as Time but mainly as Destiny. It is not easy to trace predestination in the *Iskandarnāma*, because it is God Who poses as the supreme supernatural force in the universe.[72] Nevertheless, the above argument shows the powerful role of Destiny in the *Iskandarnāma*. When the narrative is examined in retrospect, the initial perspective that *rūzigār* is only a practical and quantitative definition of Time is reversed and the notion of reflecting predestination unfolds. Fate is

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[68] "بدان که کارمن ببود و حکم خدای تعالی چنین بود" (ibid., 10:16).

[69] "مارا گفته بودی که ترا اینجا پنج ماه کارست، اکنون چهار ماه رفته و اگر او در حصار رود دشوار باشد و روزگار برود", ibid., 740:4-5.

[70] "از آن ارسلانخان نیز در این دو سه روز تمام شود که دو سه شب مانده است تا شهر بستانی", ibid., 740: 7-8.

[71] Concerning Fate (*rūzigār*), the fundamental difference between the *Iskandarnāma,* the *Shāhnāma* and the *Vīs u Rāmīn* is that in the *Iskandarnāma* Destiny is not personified to the same extent as in the case of Firdawsī's and Gurgānī's accounts. In the *Iskandarnāma* Fate has a predominant role without being over emphasized because Fate is inferior to the Creator. By contrast, in the *Shāhnāma* and the *Vīs u Rāmīn* the Creator and Fate appear to have an equal share in power. See Ringgren, 9.

[72] See below, pp.204-208.

usually closely associated with the Sky as Heaven and this is another element confirming the theory of predestination in the narrative.

Sky

The role of the Sky in the *Iskandarnāma* is closely associated with the manifestation of Time.[73] Moreover, the evidence of the *Iskandarnāma* is comparable to that of the *Shāhnāma*. Firdawsī's poem, for reasons already explained, includes vast material from pre-Islamic Iran. The role of the sky as an agent of Destiny and its association with astrology is an important element in the *Shāhnāma.*[74] The Sky as predestination is also important in the *Iskandarnāma*, and it is closely connected with Time. It is also interesting to compare the evidence from the *Iskandarnāma* and the *Shāhnāma* in order to see their similarities and differences on this issue. The evidence of the *Iskandarnāma* about the role of Heaven (=Sky) is scattered but it is enough to support its important role. This role becomes evident through the following devices: the use of the words *āsimān* (= Heaven, sky), *falak (Heaven), bihisht* (=Paradise),[75] and the episode with the Chinese astrologers and the angels in the narrative.

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[73] The role of the Sky as a manifestation of Fate is a *topos* in Persian literature in pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. The terms used for Sky are *sipihr, āsimān, charx, gardūn, gunbad, falak,* see Ringgren, 72. In Pahlavi literature the Sky is the dispenser of fate. *Menog i Xrat* mentions the *"the Sky is the most powerful", "decision of the Sky" (Bundahishn*, ed. Anklesaria, 11*)*. In the *Bundahishn*, it is stated that *"The Sky is the one dispensing the good, and his rule is absolute... When the Sky gives more, they call him "goodness", when less, the "evil Sky". This distribution is done through Time" (Bundahishn*, ed. Anklesaria, 16*)*. The Sky is hermaphrodite, good and evil, bringing sometimes misfortune and other times happiness, see Ringgren, 73.

Time is associated with astrology in Pahlavi literature. "All things arise from the Sky and the stars", see *Ringgren,*73-74. According to *Menog i Xrat* (ch. 20), at the time of the first creation, Āhūrā Māzdā, the creator, conferred upon the sun, the moon and the twelve signs of the Zodiac, Āhūrā Māzdā's twelve generals, all the good fortune predestined for the creation. They accepted from Āhūrā Māzdā to dispense the good fortune justly and equitably. Ahrīmān, however, created the seven planets, his seven generals, to prevent good fortune from being distributed to human and the creatures. Thus, a battle between good and evil forces takes place in the Heaven in astrological terms. In the Old Iranian astrological tradition, a god-Sky distributes fortune to men becoming, thus, a god of Destiny.

[74] Time and Heaven are closely related. Sky is related to the unstable nature of time (evil and good together) and in fact it is identified with it. Nobody can escape the decision of the Heaven and no one can resist it. The Heaven is a superior, sovereign and inevitable power. See Ringgren, 65. The powerful and deep-rooted astrological concepts of the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition remained strong after the advent of Islam and are traced in the *Shāhnāma.*

[75] *IN, 470:12.*

In Central Asia Alexander kills by accident the pregnant daughter of Shāhmalik, without knowing that she was pregnant. Alexander is full of remorse for his crime and seeks forgiveness from the Creator. The angel tells him *"O, Alexander! You should not have killed this woman. God is displeased with you. The angels of the Seven Skies (haft āsimān) trembled at this act, because she has embraced the true faith and she was a pious"*.[76] Elsewhere, God is the *"Creator of Seven Spheres (āsimān) and Seven Earths (zamīn)"*.[77] After Alexander's failure to find the Water of Life, he does not succeed in reaching the *Fourth Sphere* (*āsimān-i chahārum*).[78] Heaven here appears as a remote upper place where the superhuman beings, the angels, exist. In fact, it is where the Divine will comes from and is manifested. Hence, Heaven (*āsimān*) is associated indirectly with Destiny and God, forming the environment of the Unknown.[79] The notion of the Seven Skies or Spheres, along with the use of angels inhabiting there, is probably used here in an Islamic context but there is also a strong possibility of pre-Islamic (Zoroastrian) influence.[80] What is important here is that the sky is associated with the source of the decree of the Unknown.

If the above episode gives a glimpse of the role of the sky in predestination in the narrative, the episode with the Chinese astrologers (*munajjimān*) is more than revealing. When the hero is in China and feeling anxiety about his forthcoming death, he is tempted to consult the Chinese astrologers about the future of his campaign and most of all about the precise time remaining of his life. The astrologers can predict the good of the Heaven (*falak nikū*).[81] Their response is that the zodiac-Fate (*tāla'*) of Alexander is the Lion under the influence of the Sun.[82] Thus, about his first question, he is going to achieve great deeds and subdue the East, because the fortune of the East is identified with

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[76] "ای اسکندر این زن را نبایست کشتن که خدای تعالی از تو نپسندید که به سبب کشتن کشتن او فرستگان هفت آسمان بلرزیدند. حرمت آن که دین حق پذیرفته بود و مومن بود", ibid., 616:8-9.

[77] "آفریننده هفت آسمان و هفت زمین", ibid., 215:7-8.

[78] Ibid., 210:9-11. On the Day of Resurrection, the Archangel Isrāfīl, will blow the trumpet and cause the resurrection of the dead. See Southgate, 203.

[79] Firdawsī's fatalism is expressed through the idea that Heaven directs the human and makes him face his/her destiny. Ringgren, 52, 71.

[80] The use of the numeric "seven" along with a heavenly term, such as "planet", "sphere" or "Sky" is also attested in the Zoroastrian tradition: *"All good fortune and adversity coming to men and beings come from the seven [planets] and twelve [constellations]"*, *Menog i Xrat*, 8, 17.

[81] *IN*, 286:10.

[82] Ibid., 286:13.

Alexander's, it is the Lion-Sun.[83] In response to Alexander's question about his remaining life-time, they give a general and uncertain prediction: *if God brings this star to the level of the effective star of the desert, then life will be longer.*[84] Thus, the mystery of the moment of Alexander's death remains unrevealed.

Whilst Alexander's main question remains unanswered, the above episode gives a clear image of the role of the Sky concerning Destiny. In fact, it reveals an aspect of the Sky which was until then unknown in the narrative: the association of Heaven with astrology. The use of the Sun (*āftab*) and the stars (*sitāra*), as sources of knowledge and symbolic manifestation of Fate, is certainly a pre-Islamic Iranian influence which is also attested in medieval Persian literature.[85] Astrology is used by Alexander as a well-reputed and safe way of foreseeing the future. After failing to find the Water of Life, Alexander knows that his death is certain. However, he uses astrology as a source of detecting the intentions of Fate. Astrology is the path of approaching the decree of Destiny. Through astrology, Heaven acquires a more profoundly active role in the formation of a predestined reality, a reality which is unknown and is to be.

The power of astrology, however, is limited. The astrologers give their prediction for Alexander's successful campaign in the East but they cannot predict when he is going to pass away. This is left to God. This point is important because it reveals the limits both of the power of the Sky as an area manifesting the power of Destiny, and the power of Destiny itself. Above the Sky-Destiny, there is another power, God, the supreme Creator Who masters everything. The relation between God and Destiny is analyzed below.

Another manifestation of Heaven in the narrative is the angels (= *firishta*) coming down to earth to help Alexander by conveying the divine message, advising and guiding him in serious moments of his campaign.[86] The tradition of angels, as used in the narrative, is purely Islamic and enforces the concept of the manifestation and intervention of the sky influencing the hero's destiny. However, in the case of angels, although they come from Heaven, they are not agents of Time-Destiny but of the Creator, the

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[83] Ibid., 286:15.

[84] "*اگر خداوند این طالع از درجه ستاره قاطعه بیابانی بگزرد عمری دراز یابد*", ibid., 286:20-287:1.

[85] In the Avesta (Yasht 8, 1), it is mentioned that the moon and the stars distribute the *khwarenax* to men. The use of heaven bodies (stars) as agents of the Sky and Time-Destiny is well attested in the *Shāhnāma*. Favourable stars give victory in the battle-field, Ringgren, 67. The use of stars as agents of the Sky is also predominantly attested in the *Vīs u Rāmīn* (10:44; 41:21).

[86] *IN*, 21:11; 215:4-5; 412:13; 470:3.

Omnipotent God. Apart from the strong *Isrā'īliyyāt* tradition of angels, it is this particular feature that associates them with the Islamic tradition. This difference, however, does not exclude the angels from being featured as creatures and manifestations of the Heaven in its wide sense (See the chapter on the Muslim profile of the hero).

God and Destiny

God in the *Iskandarnāma* is the supreme power catalytically influencing the developments.[87] The analysis of God's role in the *Iskandarnāma* is important in order to interpret the hero's attitude toward the supernatural forces and the events of his life. God's interaction with Destiny also forms a relation crucial for the universe and mankind. Both God's nature and His relation to Destiny are fundamental for the comprehension of ideas and concepts being reflected in Iran at the time of the compilation of the narrative.

With regard to the nature of God, the Creator has an Islamic character. God is exclusively named in the narrative as "*khudā*" and "*khudāvand*" (*Per. God*) whilst the Arabic equivalent *allāh* is restrictedly used only in the motif of the *takbīr*.[88] The above Persian terms are used numerous times in the narrative along with the Quranic adjectives of "Glorious God": " *'azz wa jall*" and "*t'āla*" in motif expressions such as "*khudāvand-i 'azz wa jall*", "*khudā-yi t'āla*", "*khudāvand-i t'āla*" and "*khudāy-yi 'azz wa jall*".[89] He is the God of Islam, the Omnipotent and Omniscient.[90] The hero in various cases reminds the reader of God's omniscience[91]. When he enters the holy shrine of Ka'ba in Mecca, he implores and beseeches God to forgive his sins.[92] The above examples reflect the image of the supreme and absolute God of Islam in the narrative and some others below could shed light on the relation of God to Destiny.

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[87] God has the same role in the *Shāhnāma*. But things are not quite clear due to the coexistence of pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions. Sometimes God is the distributor of Fortune but in some other cases Time is equated to God. The same situation exists in the *Vīs u Rāmīn*, 34.62. See Ringgren, 111.

[88] The use of the Persian terms denotes that the Iranians continued in their daily lives using the same pre-Islamic Iranian words for the supreme divine power. However, the coexistence of the Persian nouns with the Arabic epithets, two of God's ninety nine, also reveals the mutual interaction of the Iranian and Islamic element in the religious concept of Muslim Iranians.

[89] *IN*, 88:5-6; 18:18-19.

[90] Ibid., 417:14-15.

[91] "گفت عدد ایشان را خدا وند عز و جل داند.", *(= he said: God knows their number)*, ibid., 96:6.

[92] Ibid., 101:19-102:2.

In the *Iskandarnāma* the concepts of God and Destiny coexist and appear influencing the acts of the hero. When Dārāb is dying in Alexander`s arms, he admits that "this was my (portion) fate and the will of God".[93] Here the term "portion", or "Fate", according to Southgate,[94] defines the Persian *"kār-i man"*, which means the personal lot dispensed by Destiny to man (see the chapter below on the hero's attitude to Destiny). One's personal Fate is predestined by Time-Destiny, while the other part is defined by the Will of God (*hukm-i khudāy*). Here, the two powers, God and Destiny appear equally influential in the formation of one's life. However, their equation is not repeated in the rest of the narrative. Henceforth, God is the absolute master of the universe. Given that God is Omnipotent, there is not much space left for Destiny to raise doubts about His superiority. *Khudā–yi t'āla* is, no doubt, the supreme master of the universe and, hence, of Destiny too. *"His will cannot be disobeyed by anyone, for God has thus decreed"*.[95] God's ability to act unlimitedly and to be influential is expressed in Alexander's invocation, an influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition: *"O Pure God! In everything you want to do, you are powerful and able. I express my gratitude to you with relief. I was so disappointed at dawn; by morning I am so joyful"*.[96] God, according to Alexander, is the One Who gives hope for the future because *"He knows best and knows all the mysteries"*.[97] God's superiority and majesty is expressed through His incomprehensible nature, *"bear in mind that God's acts are inscrutable and unlike mankind's habits and customs"*.[98]

Hence, the arrangement of a universal power scheme coming out of the narrative would put the God of Islam on top of all powers. The Creator is above everything *"Know that, by His command we shall win Heaven. We must be patient because only God knows what He wants"*.[99] After God it is Time or Destiny (Fate) which partially controls man's life through the notion of predestination. Time seems like a neutral machine, representing

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[93] Ibid., 10:16.
[94] Southgate, 13.
[95] *IN*, 616.
[96] "ای خداوند پاک تو بر هر چه خواهی قادری و توانا، این شکرهای تو با که گویم بامداد و زود بدان رنجور دل بودم و چاشتگاه بدین شاد کام!", ibid., 590:18-20; Bloomfield, *op.cit.*, 108.
[97] "گفت خدا علیمتر که او دانای اسرارست.", ibid., 702:3.
[98] "...و بدان که کار خدا عجایب است و نه بر عرف وعادت خلقانست", ibid., 470:10
[99] "... و بدان از خدای تعالی بهشت خواهیم یافتن. صبر باید کردن تا ایزاد تعالی خود چه خواهد", ibid., 470:11-12.

good and evil, and being almost independent from God. Time is uncontrollable and unknown. This arrangement is quite different from that of the *Shāhnāma* and *Vīs u Rāmīn*. There God mostly appears to have control over Destiny but some times their power is equated. In the latter Destiny is as powerful as God and often completely uncontrollable.[100] This is not the case in the *Iskandarnāma*, where God through His omnipotence is able to control Time, albeit partially. This is the reason why Alexander is so keen on asking God to help him find the Water of Life. Alexander considers God to be fully capable of controlling Time but what he asks is not something God is used to doing. For the pre-Islamic notion of Time-Fate remains strong in the narrative. This is obvious in the words of Dārāb above. In fact, God's superiority in Islamic terms is in contrast to the eternal and unchanged tyranny of Time in pre-Islamic terms. Could the God of Islam be a liberator from the oppression of the pre-Islamic notion of Time? Alexander hopes so and looks for the Water of Life. His failure to find it must not be interpreted as God's failure towards Time but mainly as a punishment afflicted to Alexander due to his arrogance (hubris). God respects the power of Time, because through Time the universe is in full order. But God is capable of overcoming Time. Both concepts Islamic and pre-Islamic are here but, this time, the God of Islam is the one who wins because He is the one invoked by Alexander's heart against Time. The supremacy of the God of Islam becomes obvious by analyzing the attitude of the hero toward both of these powers.

The Hero's attitude to Destiny and God

The image of the two Powers, God and Destiny, is reflected in the attitude of Alexander towards them. He approaches them fully aware of his inability to oppose either of these supernatural powers. However, Alexander makes a distinction between the two: Destiny is his enemy and God his comrade and guide in his campaign. In order to understand this total distinction, it is important to analyze Alexander's world-concept and attitude to Fate and the Divine.

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[100] Ringgren, 113,120.

Time for Alexander has a dual character: evil and good. It is evil because his Time is extremely restricted; he is supposed to have only a few years ahead of him before his death. On the other hand, Time has also an indirect good image because it enables Alexander to search for Immortality and when he fails, he decides to search for good deeds which will form and shape his afterlife. Hence, Destiny for Alexander is basically like a circle with a negative perimeter and core but with many positive elements within the circle. At the end of Days Alexander realizes that even he himself cannot escape from the ultimate manifestation of Time, which is Death (in spite of the fact that the end of the narrative is not known).

According to pre-Islamic Iranian tradition, the hero is subjected to the main principles of Destiny for man (*baxt, baghubaxt*) and kings (*baxt, baghubaxt* and *farr*).[101] *Baxt* (= *portion, share*) is what has been allotted to man by Destiny.[102] It has a neutral character.[103] *Baxt* is allotted to man from his birth. *Baxt* is realized through the *bihāna*, the "pretext," the effective cause bringing *baxt* from its theoretical to its practical dimension. On the other hand, *bagubaxt* also means portion but it is sent from God according to his deeds (good or evil).[104] That means that *bagubaxt* is a divine reward or punishment for the good or evil acts of men respectively. Both *baxt* and *bagubaxt* form and influence catalytically the life of men. Both of these principles are allotted on a personal basis.[105] While the above principles are given to all men without exception, *farr* or *Divine Effulgence* is an exclusive privilege for kings.[106] *Farr* (*Divine Charisma*) is a kind of *bagubaxt*, enabling the king to have a righteous and proper governing of his people. Without *farr*, whose presence in the *baxt* of a king depends on his good deeds (like the *bagubaxt* for the common people), the king is transformed into an evil or impotent ruler sentenced to ultimate failure. *Farr* is allotted to the members of the royal dynasty and, therefore, is transmitted through blood lineage or moral virtue. It is the notion of *Divine Charisma* along with his Muslim profile which gives Alexander a

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[101] Ringgren, 80.
[102] *ShN*, 6, Luhrāsp, v. 265-268.
[103] *ShN*, 6, Dārā, v. 128-129.
[104] Ringgren, 90.
[105] Ibid., 81.
[106] About the Zoroastrian concept of *farr*, see R.N. Frye, 'The Charisma of Kingship in Ancient Iran', *IA*, 4 (1964), 36-55; M. Alinia, 'Divine Charisma: Meaning and Representation' (in Greek), *Dodone*, 32 (2003), 243-246.

superhuman nature in the narrative. As a *farr* holder, Alexander represents the model of the Iranian righteous king who through divine guidance can mediate between humans and the Divine. His *farr* is enough to ensure him a role of supernatural dimensions. However, this pre-Islamic notion in the narrative coexists harmonically with the monotheistic tradition of *prophet king*.[107]

The above pre-Islamic principles are important because they associate mankind with Destiny and God. They constitute the two necessary terms in order to understand the Iranian world-concept of life and government, as this is reflected in Persian literature. While in the *Shāhnāma* the above ideas are overwhelmingly present,[108] the same is not the case for the *Iskandarnāma*. In the *Iskandarnāma*, the pre-Islamic terms of *baxt*, and *baghubaxt* are not explicitly attested whilst *farr* is literally attested once. These concepts are implicitly present in the narrative, albeit in an extremely limited way. The case of Dārāb's death has already been mentioned as an example of the co-existence of God and Destiny. The same phrase, *"my portion (fate) and God's will"*, however, is indicative of the presence of the notion of *baxt* (my portion) and *baghubaxt-farr* (God's will).[109] However, the notions of *baxt* and *baghubaxt* are hardly implied elsewhere in the narrative.

Nevertheless, the notion of *farr* is important in the *Iskandarnāma*. The struggle between Alexander and Dārāb and the eventual victory of the former is derived from the Iranian tradition regarding Alexander's origin. According to this tradition, Alexander is a semi-Iranian (and semi-Greek) ruler who returns to Iran to claim what he deserves, the throne of the Iranians. This episode is attested in several versions and accounts of Persian literature.[110] Hence, the introduction of the *Iskandarnāma*, which is influenced by this tradition, has strongly pre-Islamic ideas hidden within it. One of these is *farr*. It is strongly implied that Alexander is the holder of *farr* due to: first, his blood lineage to the Kayanid ruling dynasty of Iran, the holders of *farr* (he is the son of Dārāb); second, his indisputable moral virtues: his behaviour toward Dārāb during their struggle and especially after the latter's defeat, reflects Alexander's good nature (*"O brother,... I did*

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[107] See p.158.
[108] Ringgren, 80-86.
[109] *IN*, 10:16, see n.28.
[110] Southgate, 167.

not seek to win Iran's kingship, ..., and that I will leave it to you and depart. But you did not listen; I am your brother... ").[111] This nature forces Dārāb to change his initial opinion of his half-brother: "*Know my brother...*" and then he requests from Alexander to take care of his family.[112] Due to his arrogance Dārāb loses the divine charisma of reigning. Thus, Alexander is accepted by Dārāb as his legitimate successor. His legitimate character has already been proved by the acceptance of the Iranian nobility and the people: "*May you enjoy your father's throne!*"[113] From the above paradigms, there is a concept of concealed legitimacy for Alexander. He is the real successor of his Iranian king and father and, although not mentioned, there is an implication of the idea of *farr* in the transmission of kingship to Alexander. But if the notion of *farr* is implied in the above example, later on in the narrative it is literary attested: when the hero's military skilfulness is tested at the court of the king of Ceylon, Alexander manages to use the bow of Isfandiyār because he has the "*farr-i padishāhī*" and his own strength (*ghuvat-i khish*).[114] Obviously the pre-Islamic notion of *farr* is present in the narrative, thus forming the hero's destiny. Its role in the narrative is important in order to justify Alexander's legitimacy to the throne of Iran. Then, this notion remains in the background, though, being present everywhere. The Iranian notion of kingship co-exists with Alexander's Muslim profile as the *Double-Horned One* and his association with Solomon. Alexander is a righteous Muslim king by nature and as a righteous Muslim, he enjoys God's grace. As an Iranian king, he holds *farr*.

Alexander's attitude towards Destiny and God are different. For the hero Destiny has an evil nature because it gives him restricted time to live. Alexander is determined to defeat Destiny by finding the Water of Life.[115] Thus the *āb-i ḥayāt* is the most prominent device presented as a goal of the hero to achieve salvation from the oppression of Destiny.

The role of the *āb-i ḥayāt* in the narrative is in accordance with Islamic tradition. The *Water of Immortality* (*āb-i ḥayāt*, *'ayn al-ḥayāt* or *nahr al-ḥayāt*) is one of three

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[111] "*ای برادر، ... من پادشاهی ایران نمی خواهم، از آن تو استو من می گزرم فرمان نکردی، و من برادر توام.*", *IN*, 10:11-15.
[112] "*ای برادر بدان*", ibid., 10:16.
[113] "*جایگاه پدربر تو مبارک باد*", ibid., 8:20-21.
[114] Ibid., 60:6-7.
[115] Ibid., 204.

types of water that Islamic tradition has identified as an important aspect of Muslim life.[116] Water is a means of purification (*Qur'ān* 8:11) and the first substance for the creation of life.[117] Islamic revelation (*tanzīl*) is like water sent down from Heaven by the Divine.[118] The Ismā'īlis in the esoteric interpretation of the *Qur'ān* (*ta'wīl*) consider water as a symbol of knowledge.[119] Thus, the prominent role of water in the dogmatic apparatus of Islam made it a popular theme in Islamic lore.[120] The Water of Life has been intimately associated with the prophetic figure of Khiḍr and the location of the Fountain is thought to be somewhere in the Land of Darkness.[121] The sacred image of water in Islam displays the importance that the Water of Life has in the narrative and the esoteric notion of the hero for his battle against Fate. Water is the fundamental part of Creation and it has powerful applications. By drinking from *āb-i ḥayāt*, Alexander hopes that he will become a part of the archetypal source of Creation and eternal life. His aim is to taste from the source of Creation and eventually to be identified with it.

Thus the hero, having a supernatural nature, goes openly against Time and Destiny.[122] Alexander possesses supernatural powers, like Solomon, and this is due to the divine protection he enjoys.[123] Hence, his attitude towards the Divine is that of piety expressed in the form of total submission.[124] Alexander, through Khidr's intervention,[125] sees God as his comrade in his endeavour to find immortality and thus salvation from the oppression of Time.[126] The hero desires immortality because he wants to escape from the claws of Time-Destiny once and for all. It is obvious that these two concepts have a different role in Alexander's mind.

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[116] The other two types are the *āb-i Zamzam* and *āb-i Kawthar*, see I.K. Poonawala, 'Āb, ii, Water in Muslim Iranian Culture', *EIr*, 1, 27-28.

[117] *"And of water We have made everything living"*, *Qur'ān* 21:30; see also 24:45.

[118] M. Lings, 'The Quranic Symbolism of Water', *SCR*, 2 (1968), 153-154.

[119] Poonawala, *op.cit.*, 28.

[120] According to the Legends of the Prophets, water was the first substance when God brought the universe into existence. *QA*, 3.

[121] Ibid., 338-342.

[122] The supernatural image of Alexander agrees with the tradition of *post-Shāhnāma* heroes. See Hanaway, 'The Iranian Epics', 76-98.

[123] Divine intervention in romances of medieval times is a *topos*, see Bloomfield, *op.cit.*, 120.

[124] His only hope is God because *"whatever has decreed will come to pass"*. *IN*, 701:13; Southgate, 151.

[125] *IN*, 206:16.

[126] Alexander's effort to acquire immortality is in accordance with the pre-Islamic Iranian notion that human existence in this world takes place through Time. But after death his existence does not belong to Time. *Mainyō-i Khrad*, 22. Ringgren, 93.

But the crucial point about Alexander`s attitude toward God and Destiny is his failure to find the Water of Life. His disappointment is indescribable[127] and he realises that his strenuous efforts in going against Destiny have been in vain.[128] However, he does not accept his failure as a defeat by Time but as the will of God. Nobody knows His will and nobody can go against It. Alexander accepts his powerless nature before God and gives up his endeavour to acquire Immortality. He decides to live the rest of his life performing as many as good acts as possible and most importantly spreading Islam. God is his comrade in this effort.[129] Throughout his life and campaign he never ceases to accept the superiority of God over any other power.[130] His sincere faith in God is not restricted by the failure of his egoism to find immortality. For every good act he achieves, he thanks God. For every failure of his character, he humbles himself before God and asks for forgiveness. His imperfect nature leads him to self-awareness and the recognition of God's superiority.[131] Thus, Alexander`s moral improvement counter-balances his inner fear of death. Time goes on pursuing a hero who is being prepared for the ultimate encounter with Death (Time) full of Piety and anxiety: "*...and the order of the Glorious and Pure Lord will come...*".[132] But this entirely unpromising combat seems unimportant for Alexander compared to the greatness and eternity of the Divine. It is the latter that prevails in Alexander`s mind and, hence, over the temporary power of Destiny.

The preceding discussion has attempted to provide new insights into the notion of Time as a manifestation of predestination, its association with the sky and the relation of Time to God in the *Iskandarnāma*. It is apparent that pre-Islamic (Zoroastrian) and Islamic notions for both, Time and God, are interestingly interwoven in the narrative. This denotes that after the Arab conquest of Iran these concepts about life and death, Time and Fate and the role of God were preserved and transmitted, both orally and

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[127] *IN*, 210:7-8.

[128] About the same attitude of Alexander in *the Shāhnāma*, see Kappler, 'Le Roi 'au coeur eveille' ', 90-95.

[129] "*How dare Shāhmalik block my route when God has granted me the whole world from the East to the West*", *IN*, 510:21; 511:1; Southgate, 119.

[130] *IN*, 616:21.

[131] "**هر چه در جهان بحر که در جهان**" (=*Everything in this world is for this world*), ibid., 616:13; He expresses his gratitude to God by admitting that He has given him all that he ever desired; "**بر خدایا این بنده را کام دل دادی و بر همه قم مسلط کردی بر این دشمنان آدمیان مسلط کن ...**" (= *O God, you have satisfied your servant and made him rule over the magicians. Made him prevail over these enemies of mankind*), ibid., 93:9-10.

[132] "**...و فرمان خداوند تعالی و تقدس در رسد...**", ibid., 98:6-8.

literary, during the early Islamic period. The *Iskandarnāma* can be seen as an example of prose romance reflecting public beliefs and the co-existence of Zoroastrian and Islamic concepts in eastern Iran at such an early period.

II. Love: spiritual and physical manifestations

As already mentioned, the *Iskandarnāma* belongs to the *genre* of epic romance. That means that the epic and romance are two genres indispensably interwoven in one narrative.[1] Epic emphasises deed and reflects the heroic behaviour of the protagonists with a narrative full of war-scenes and chivalrous and magnanimous deeds. It also claims historicity without being historically exact.[2] Romance is based on words through dialogue and discourse: through the love affair[3] and the adventure of, usually, two or three lovers the romance expresses more interpretively than in an expository way the eternal quest of man for the accomplishment of the desired self-awareness and self-perfection.[4] Thus love, as a device symbolizing this quest, plays a central role in romance and hence in the *Iskandarnāma*.[5] Moreover, love in the narrative is strongly associated with the comic element. This aspect of comic love results from the skilful narrative technique of the author: Alexander as an invincible king is so vulnerable to the charm of women. When this vulnerability happens in every country he visits, then the situation becomes comic. Women's hearts appear to be an important aim of Alexander almost equal to the conquest of a land. Moreover, the large number of his wives and concubines and the struggle and animosity which are developed between some of them for Alexander's heart strengthens the comic atmosphere in the narrative.

The focus of this chapter is to analyse the textual evidence about the role of love, both spiritual and physical, in the narrative and the formation or advancement of the plot. This evidence is placed in the spectrum of love's role in medieval Persian literature, as this is reflected in other Persian versified romances such as *Vīs u Rāmīn*, *Layla u Majnūn* and *Khusraw u Shīrīn*. Apart from being a means of struggle between the two sexes, love is mostly a tool for entertainment in the *Iskandarnāma*. Thus it is differentiated from the role of love in the more polite and intellectual accounts of the Persian romantic poetry.

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[1] Love is a common feature in Persian prose romances, see Hanaway, 'Formal Elements', 141.
[2] Bloomfield, 'Episodic Motivation', 105.
[3] J.C. Bürgel, 'The Romance' in *Persian Literature*, ed. E. Yarshater (New York, 1988), 161.
[4] J. Scott Meisami, *Medieval Persian Court Poetry* (Princeton, 1987), 132.
[5] For the centrality of love in the romances, see eadem, 'Kings and Lovers. Ethical Dimensions of Medieval Persian Romance', *Edebiyat*, 1 (1987), 1-27.

The role of love in Persian romances is quite similar to its role in the Greek romances of the Hellenistic period and Late Antiquity. It has been suggested that not only did the Hellenistic novel (or romance) influence in terms of repertoire and motifs the development of this genre in pre-Islamic (Parthian, Sasanian) and Islamic Iran but, in fact, it contributed, in combination with the pre-Islamic and Islamic Iranian fictitious tradition, to its establishment as a genre in the Persian literary tradition.[6] Several features of the Hellenistic novel such as those of travel (especially sea travel), love, generosity, chastity, forgiveness, honesty, bravery and others owe their existence in the Persian accounts to the Greek tradition which was elaborated in the Hellenistic era.[7] In both literary traditions (Persian and Greek) the spirit of youth and adventure are predominant. The hypothetical transmission of these features from the Greek to the Persian tradition must have taken place in the Parthian and more especially the Sasanian period through the translation of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes' Alexander Romance* (see the first chapter) as well as the influence of the oral tradition.[8] This transmission is part of the phenomenon of the influence of Greek literature upon the literatures of the Middle East. Hellenic influence is attested in the *Vāmiq u 'Adhrā* and other Persian romances in the eleventh century.[9] Undoubtedly, there is no adequate material from the Parthian and Sasanian periods to bolster Davis' view about the extent of the Greek influence in Persian romances. However, Hägg and Utas's pioneer work about the influence of the Greek novel *Metiokhos and Parthenope* (first century BC-second century AD) on the compilation of the Persian medieval romance *Vāmiq u 'Adhrā* strongly suggests that this influence really existed within the Graeco-Iranian interaction in the field of literature.[10] This influence could have taken place either directly (from Greek to Persian, Pahlavi or New Persian) or through Arabic translations.

As has already been mentioned, the *Iskandarnāma* is the earliest example of prose romance reflecting the direct influence of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* tradition. Hence, the

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[6] Sheikh Bīghamī, *Love and War: Adventures from the Fīrūz Shāh Nāma,* trans. W.L. Hanaway, Jr. Delmar (New York, 1974), 5-7; R. Davis, *Panthea's Children: Hellenistic Novels and Medieval Persian Romances* (New York, 2002), 16.

[7] Greek novels such as those of Chariton, Achellius Tattius, Longus and Apuleius are examples of the popularity that the Greek novel enjoyed in Late Antiquity. See Hägg, *Novel,* 3-4; concerning the oral tradition and the minstrels in the royal court in Islamic Iran, see M. Boyce, 'The Persian Gōsān and Iranian minstrel tradition', *JRAS* (1957), 10-45; Sheikh Bīghamī, *Fīrūz Shāh Nāma,* 1.

[8] See the introductory chapter on this issue. Also for the translations of the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account, see Hägg, *op.cit.,* 140-141.

[9] Davis, *Pantheas' Children*, 29-31.

[10] Hägg and Utas, *The Virgin*, 1-22.

Iskandarnāma contains many of the above elements of Hellenic descent, such as the long and extensive travels in remote and unknown lands and on the sea. Additionally, love is another element of the Greek tradition that abounds in the *Iskandarnāma* and other Persian romances.[11] The meaning and function of love in the narrative follow the general Greek pattern: young, physically beautiful, brave heroes take part in multiple adventures and express the values of the cultural *elite*.[12] It is within this literary background that the *love* theme in its spiritual and physical manifestations must be understood and analysed in the *Iskandarnāma*. Before examining the role of love in the narrative, however, it is important to have a brief look at the concept of love in the medieval Islamic societies, as this image is reflected in several literary genres.

Love as physical intercourse has been a central issue in the history and literature of Islamic societies. The issue of physical love has been thoroughly discussed in several literary genres: first, religious accounts, second, scientific (medical) treatises and third, the several genres of 'polite' or court literature. With regard to the first category, it must be emphasized that Islam acknowledges the importance of sexual intercourse in human relations, accepting it as a natural process (in marriage) but at the same time as a problematic feature in human relations (outside marital status).[13] Interestingly enough, Islam's attitude is more liberal than that of Christianity[14]. Citations for the issue of physical love in the Ḥadīths abound. Men are not allowed *"to throw themselves on their wives like beasts"* but they should approach them *"through kisses and words"*.[15] Along with the comparatively outspokenness of Islam about sex there is a strict approach to the relation of the two sexes characterised by their segregation.[16]

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[11] Rouhi, 175.
[12] Sheikh Bīghamī, *Fīrūz Shāh Nāma,* 5.
[13] For al-Ghazzālī's opinion on this issue, see J.C. Bürgel, 'Love, Lust and Longing: Eroticism in Early Islam' in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. A. L. al-Sayyid-Marsot (Los Angeles, 1977), 87-88.
[14] F. Rosenthal, 'Sources for the Role of Sex in Medieval Muslim Society' in *Society and the Sexes in Medieval Islam*, ed. A. L. al-Sayyid-Marsot (Los Angeles, 1977), 4; Rouhi, 147.
[15] B. Lewis, *The Political Language of Islam* (Chicago, 1988), 13.
[16] The segregation of sexes is closely associated with the inferior nature of woman in the monotheistic tradition of the Middle East. In particular she is identified with the lower part of man: she may be the body, the animal part, the flesh, which should be one in desire with the spirit. See J. M. Ferrante, *Woman as image in medieval literature, from the twelfth century to Dante* (New York, 1975), 33.

But if religious texts represent the conservative approach to physical love. secular scientific writings appear more realistic and practical in nature, being on many occasions, at odds with the religious tradition. In the *Canon of Medicine* by Ibn Sīnā the issue of sexual activity is presented as an important factor for the preservation of harmony and health in the human body. Sexual intercourse acts preventively against poor physical and mental health.[17] In the chapter titled "Benefits of Intercourse" Ibn Sīnā deals (strictly in medical terms) with psychology and points out the curative role of physical intimacy for male and female physiology, accusing doctors of inadequacy when they do not discuss sexual issues openly with their patients.[18]

While the scientific approach to physical love is systematic, consistent with a scientific code and has a realistic spirit, several literary genres reflect the popular mind about love. Several collections of anecdotes, entitled sexual treatises, reflect the clever ways that men and women contrive in order to be involved in extra-marital affairs.[19]

Whereas erotic treatises may give a live and direct image of physical intimacy in Islamic society, the issue of physical love is developed in a more fully elaborated way in the court literature of Islamic Iran. The role of tales as devices for the discussion of various ideas about physical love is predominant. Famous cycles of tales such as those of the *Alf Layla wa Layla* (= *1001 Nights*), *Sindbād* (=*The Seven Viziers* and *Chihil Ṭūṭī* (=*Forty Parrots*) contain valuable information on the role of physical love in Islamic society[20]. These accounts reflect pre-Islamic lore coming from India and Greece.[21] This

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[17] *Qānūn,* III:223-224 cited in Rouhi, 150.
[18] *Qānūn,* III:223-260 cited in Rouhi, 152.
[19] Ibid., 153; Rosenthal, *op.cit.,* 16.
[20] In all these cycles of tales, the topic of physical love is central. In the case of the *1001 Nights*, deceived by his adulterous wife, the king decides to kill each night a woman of his harem. The motive for his action is a consequence of physical love, both for him and his female victims. These repercussions will be balanced and cured by the spiritual love he develops for Shahrzād. See *The Arabian Nights*, trans. Ḥusayn Haddawy (New York, 1990); the seventh tale of the *Sindbād* cycle (of Sankskrit origin) was translated into Persian and became known as *Bakhtiyārnāma.* Here physical love plays a prominent role since the prince Bakhtiyār unjustifiably suspects his wife of having an adulterous relation with another man. See *Bakhtiyārnāma*, ed. M. Rushān (Tehran, 1348/1969); the physical aspect of love is predominant indeed in the Chihil Ṭūṭī, in which there is a huge bulk of sexual stories told by a parrot to the wife of his master in order to prevent her from committing adultery during the absence of her husband. See Rouhi, 160.
[21] In early Sasanian times (third-fourth centuries) the Sasanian Empire extended to north western India incorporating the kingdom of the Kushāns. See A.D.H, Bivar, 'The History of Eastern Iran', in *CHI,* 3/1, 210. Subsequently Indo-Iranian cultural interaction was fostered under Sasanian political rule in Afghanistan and north-western India. It was at that time that Indian influence on the literature of the Iranians became prominent. Several Sasanian kings, such as Shāpūr II (309-379 AD), patronised the translation of Indian accounts into Persian.

lore became known to the Iranians (Sasanian period) and the Arabs through translation into Pahlavi and Arabic. Regardless of the type of tales in these accounts, each one of the above cycles clearly reflects the different image and role of physical love in the accounts of *udabā'* and those of the *'ulamā* and the religious tradition in general.[22]

In the above cases the physical aspect of love is predominant. But what about the case of spiritual love? This is reflected amongst others in the romances of *Vīs u Rāmīn*, *Khusraw u Shīrīn* and *Layla u Majnūn*.[23] The term "spiritual" reflects the opposite status to the physical aspect of love. The term 'spiritual' does not imply that this type of love does not have any relation with the physical element. In fact, the latter is the inaugurating feature for the establishment of the spiritual love. It reflects, however, a totally different situation. The lovers see each other through their physical and mainly spiritual dimension. The existence of the one becomes indispensable for the other although mutuality on this issue is not always the rule. However, the term *'spiritual'* not only deals only with the dimension of the lovers but also with the objective of this love. Through the being of the *Other,* the lover explores his/her own self. The ultimate goal of this love is not only spiritual intimacy but mainly self-awareness and the perfection of each lover.[24]

Having examined in brief the role of love in the several literary genres of medieval Islamic society it becomes evident that both aspects of love, spiritual and physical, are present in various accounts, with the physical element being overwhelmingly present. The above accounts denote the strong literary tradition that was produced on the issue of love. It is within this tradition that the *Iskandarnāma*'s attitude towards love must be interpreted and approached.

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[22] Rouhi, 160.

[23] In Gurgānī's *Vīs u Rāmīn,*[ed. M. J. Mahjūb (Tehran, 1338/1959)], which is associated with the European romance Tristan, spiritual love dominates the relationship between *Vīs and Rāmīn.* The former is betrothed to her brother but against her will she marries King Mūbad. Mūbad's young brother *Rāmīn* falls in love with his brother's young wife and vice versa. The two lovers suffer many twists and turns. At the end *Rāmīn* replaces Mūbad on the throne and then the two lovers enjoy a happy life until the end of their lives.

In Niẓāmī's *Khusraw u Shīrīn (KSh)*, the love affair between the Sasanian King Khusraw II Parwīz and the Armenian Princess Shīrīn reflects another type of love, a combination of total spiritual love on Shīrīn's part for Khusraw and the less spiritual love of the King-Lover Khusraw to her. Their love suffers many twists and turns, such as Khusraw's unstable heart and his affair with Maryam and mainly the story of Shīrīn and Farḥād. Shīrīn proves her total devotion to Khusraw rejecting Farḥād's excessive love for her. In the end Khusraw and Shīrīn are reunited and their love prevails.

In Niẓāmī's *Laylī u Majnūn* (*LM*), two Bedouin cousins fall in love with one another but they are not allowed to marry. *Majnūn* (=*lit. the one dominated by jinn, the insane*) possessed by his limitless love for *Layla* becomes mad and dies after many for him painful adventures.

[24] Meisami, *Persian Court Poetry*, 132-133.

The role of love in the narrative is so important that it would not be an exaggeration to say that it coexists with the epic element on an equal basis. In fact, the *Iskandarnāma* is the only Persian popular prose romance where physical love plays such a predominant role.[25] As for the spiritual aspect of love, the *Iskandarnāma* follows the general literary patterns of romance in the Persian tradition: love is twofold, physical and spiritual. At the centre of the love theme is the hero, Alexander who appears as a restless lover ready to conquer the hearts of princesses and queens throughout his campaign.[26]

The sexual element (physical love) in Alexander's numerous adventures makes the hero a type of 'Alexander-Casanova'. Women serve mostly as objects of conquest and lustful desire, with the exception of Arāqīt, as shown below. For Alexander the conquest of a land cannot be achieved fully unless he conquers the heart of a beautiful local princess. While this is not stated in the narrative, it is implied from the sequence of events. Thus, love acts as a device fulfilling one of Alexander's basic personal aspirations, the conquest of the land not only in political terms but also in a personal manner. Hence, egoism is hidden behind the indulgence of the hero in sexual activity. This type of egoism serves Alexander's earthly nature and love reveals the 'human Alexander'.

But if physical love reflects the 'earthly Alexander', spiritual love unfolds the spiritual aspect of the hero. The paradigms of spiritual love are not restricted to the protagonist's feelings but also include Alexander's main lover, Arāqīt. The latter indulges in a spiritual love affair with Alexander, an affair that affects their personalities and spiritual improvement. This love represents the essence of the romance. While in physical love the comic element is inevitable, in spiritual love the comic element is very restricted and gives its place to deeper notions, such as those of devotion, dependence, patience and sacrifice. These are the basic manifestations of spiritual love in the *Iskandarnāma*.

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[25] In other romances, the theme of love is also present but it is not so predominant and comic. For example, love in the *Dārābnāma* is attested in the affair between Alexander and Burāndukht but this affair does not have a comic character. Love here acts mainly as a pleasant interval in the long succession of their heroic deeds and scenes (*DN*, 1:467; see also p.230). Thus, the *Dārābnāma* could be called more 'serious' and closer to the standards of pure epic prose accounts.

[26] Southgate, 'Portrait', 282.

Physical Love

For the hero the conquest of lands is proportional to the conquest of women. In every place he visits, there is a love affair for him. This love element reveals a private and simultaneously comic aspect of the legendary Alexander. This comic element, however, does not diminish his heroic prestige. The comic and heroic aspects of Alexander are inseparably interwoven in the narrative. This sexual-comic aspect of Alexander proves beyond doubt that the text was compiled for entertainment. An analysis of the text passages will verify this claim.

When Dārā is in his last moments at the hands of Alexander, he expresses in his last wishes his desire that Alexander should protect his wives and marry them (Rūshanak and the Indian princess). Alexander answers him in grief that he will fulfil all the wishes of Darius except the last one about his wives.[27] When he conquers Porus' kingdom, he respects the wives of the Indian king, although they are beautiful 'like the moon'.[28] Later on, Alexander cannot prevent himself from marrying Nāhīd, Fūr's beautiful daughter.[29]

In Kashmīr, Alexander's adventures are endless. One basic condition for a lady to become Alexander's future wife is to become Muslim. This occurs in Kashmīr, when he asks King Āzādbukht for the hand of the latter's daughter, Māhāfarīn. Alexander's demand reveals his zeal for conversion. Here the comic element is interwoven with that of the religious-heroic. Due to some tricks of Āzādbukht, who orders a sorcerer to give an elixir to Alexander, the latter becomes impotent in his night intercourse with Māhāfarīn.[30] After many episodes Alexander successfully forces the sorcerer to cure him. Another comic detail of Alexander's approach to sex and women is that after his marriage to Māhāfarīn, he is faithful to her, albeit temporarily, neglecting his concubines. Such is his enthusiasm for his new wife. This enthusiasm in Alexander's private life is comic because it is in contrast to the serious and epic profile of the hero in battle.

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[27] See n. 44..
[28] *IN*, 21:17-18.
[29] Ibid., 23:2-3.
[30] Ibid., 28:15.

In Yemen, he is involved in a love affair with Princess Suhayl. When Alexander saw the unveiled Suhayl, he *lost his mind*.[31] Suhayl is indeed of unprecedented beauty, but female beauty stimulates Alexander's interest in every place he visits! The more he explores the earth the more beautiful women he meets. The motif in these love stories is known; the female, always coming from the royal circles, falls in love with him when she sees him, or even before, in her dreams. It is a dream that occurs with Suhayl.

In Egypt Alexander marries Sitāra, the daughter of the king of Egypt after several episodes.[32] In Andalus he meets with Qaydhāfa. Her mature age is not clearly stated but it is implied by the shrewdness and the maturity of the queen in trapping Alexander. When she visits him in the night and unveils herself, Alexander is astonished by her beauty. However, Qaydhāfa's episode is the only story in the *Iskandarnāma* in which the author does not present Alexander as marrying or even having sexual intercourse with a female. The author has doubts about what really happened between them. He mentions several rumours that Qaydhāfa stayed three nights in Alexander's chamber but the author has doubts, saying that *"God knows best"*.[33] Another interesting element in Qaydhāfa's story is that the Queen of Andalus with her cleverness changes (in part) Alexander's opinion about women. In particular, he realizes that a woman can be equal to him in cleverness.[34] Suhayl showed him that women can be brave in the battlefield and Qaydhāfa now impresses him with her shrewdness.[35] Alexander will meet a rare combination of bravery and shrewdness in Arāqīt.

Another formulaic element concerning Alexander's female conquests is that on many occasions he marries women whom he saves from death or difficult circumstances. In Turkistān he saves a princess from death in the region near the Akhḍar Sea. With his shrewdness, Alexander reveals the false accusations of two hermits that the princess was unchaste and punishes them by setting them on fire.[36] The reward for Alexander is his

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[31] "ایمان گشت", *IN*, 112:12-13; Southgate's translation *"strength departed from his limbs" is not precise*, 42.
[32] Ibid., 145:6.
[33] "و الله اعلم", ibid., 195:14; see also Kappler, 'Le Roi 'au coeur eveille' ', 86-90.
[34] Ibid., 195:5.
[35] "و این زنی است که از هزار مرد بهتر است." (= *she is a woman who is better than 1,000 men)*, ibid., 195:14.
[36] *IN*, 238:1-3.

marriage to the Princess.[37] The same pattern is repeated in the case of a maiden who has been trapped by a Zangī in a well.[38]

Moreover, Alexander usually indulges in sexual pleasure only after marriage, with some exceptions of course (see Qaydhāfa's case). He is a slave of his bodily desires and he seeks intercourse every night (Māhāfarīn's story) and with more than one woman! This is against the norm of abstention from sexual intercourse for some days, according to the written prescription for the ruler in the *andarz* tradition.[39] Nevertheless, his political decisions and strategy are not influenced by his desires. He is mature enough to make the distinction between his earthly and spiritual preferences, a sign of his dual personality. With the exception of Arāqīt's love affair with Arslānkhān's son, Alexander does not display forbidden jealousy towards any of his wives anywhere in the text.[40]

The enrichment of his harem not only brings pleasure and happiness to him, but it becomes also a source of endless trouble. His incessant sexual activity leads him to new adventures; he falls in love with Zubayda, the pious maiden, and he marries her. The problems begin when Arāqīt and Zubayda become jealous enemies.[41] However, on the whole, Alexander acts within the spirit of polygamy as this is prescribed in pre-Islamic and mainly in Islamic societies.

With regard to physical love, its main feature is the external appearance of the lovers. This makes Alexander either "fall in love" or desire women. Hyperboles of the narrator often express the power of lust in the story, such as in the case of the Yemeni princess Suhayl.[42] But these expressions also attribute a comic element to the love affairs of Alexander, making the story more amusing. The comic element is achieved, first, by the use of a strong antithesis: the brave and invincible Alexander is defeated by his emotions for women, and second, by the description of Alexander's comic reactions. The comic element and physical love in the *Iskandarnāma* coexist and act almost simultaneously, creating an amusing plot, characteristic of a semi-popular account. It is

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[37] Ibid., 241:2.
[38] Ibid., 352:4.
[39] *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 14:45-46.
[40] For jealousy, see *Qābūsnāma*, ch. 27:73.
[41] *IN*, 729:12-14.
[42] See p. 217, n.32.

also emphasised here that this erotic-comic aspect of Alexander is unique in the tradition of the Alexander romances.

The comic element is used in the narrative in various ways. First, it points out the sexual skilfulness of Alexander. In the dramatic moment of Dārāb's last moments, Alexander does not hesitate to refuse comically to satisfy Dārāb`s last desire to marry the latter's widows. Alexander replies in tears:

> *"I will do everything you have said but not this. God forbid that I should desire your wife, because I have four free wives and forty concubines, some of whom are from here and others from Greece".*[43]

Here humour is traced not only in the excessive number of wives and concubines but mainly in the selection of time by the narrator to use this number as an argument for refusing the last wish of a man (Dārāb). The comic motif of an excessive number of wives is repeated later on in the narrative: when Arāqīt demands that Alexander pay attention to no other woman but her,[44] the king rejects her demand in a comically cynical way: *'Do not say more of this because it cannot happen...I am a king and have many wives and concubines here and in Greece'*.[45] The humoristic scene goes on with Arāqīt's question *"How many wives do you have in Greece?"*[46] Alexander`s answers deal with the usage of the same *topos* of excessive number of women, but this time repeated in a more sexually explicit way: "*and God has given me such prowess that in one night I have entered ninety chambers*".[47] Again, the comic element is strengthened by another hyperbole, the use of God as the source of Alexander's prowess. The motif of an excessive number of sexual partners and wives is also associated with the *topos* of the angry and jealous wife (Arāqīt) in the case of the pious Zubayda. This time things are more difficult for Alexander who complies with Zubayda`s demands that he must have her above all women and that she will be in his 'night service' twice per week; for she

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[43] "هر چه فرمودی بجای آورم الا این یکی، معاذالله که من زن تو بخواهم که با من خود چهار زن هست آزد و چهل کنیزک بعضی از ینجا و بعضی از روم". *IN*, 11:4-5.

[44] Arāqīt's demand to have the monopoly in Alexander's heart is identified with the same demand of Shīrīn to Khusraw: 'دو دلبر داشتن از یک دلی نیست' (= *It is impossible for a heart to have two loves*), *KS*, 308.

[45] *IN*, 406:21-407:3.

[46] Ibid., 407:4.

[47] Ibid., 407:6-7; Southgate, 99.

wishes to spend the night in prayers in the remaining five days of the week.[48] Alexander gladly accepts! Zubayda's demands, however, cause Arāqīt's hatred who is jealous of her rival in bed! Zubayda and Arāqīt become enemies and Alexander is forced to revise his sexual timetable: He will spend three nights per week with Arāqīt, two nights with Zubayda, and two other nights with other women.[49] In this episode the motifs of the jealous woman and the excessive number of sexual activity are creatively combined and produce a humorous quarrel which increases the heat of entertainment for the audience.[50]

Alexander's impotence is also a comic theme.[51] When he tries to have physical intercourse with his new wife, the princess of Kashmīr Māhāfarīn, he realizes that he cannot carry out his sexual duties towards her.

> *"And when the maiden slept with King Alexander, Alexander desired her, but he could not take her virginity (lit. praise her fruit)".*[52]

Impotence makes Alexander feel embarrassed. The next night he tries to overcome this unexpected problem by visiting his other wives (Porus' daughter) and concubines but the problem remains. His impotence is not his fault but is due to an elixir made by a Brahman.[53] The comic element is obvious from the sequence of events and this time the narrator comments on Alexander's comic situation by saying that in spite of his embarrassment he did not say anything about the seal of forty maidens he had taken in Rūm in one night.[54] Again the *topos* of an excessive number of sexual partners appears, this time in combination with that of impotence.

Another motif is that of love at first sight. This motif is used widely in Persian prose romances and world literature.[55] In the case of the *Samak-i 'ayyār* Khurshīd Shāh

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[48] *IN*, 725:16-19.
[49] Ibid., 729:12-14.
[50] In another episode, the motif of the excessive number of sexual partners is also attested. A few days before his first meeting with Zubayda, Alexander arranges his 'timetable': *"one night with Qātil's bride, one night with Qaymūn's daughter, and the rest of the week with his concubines"* (ibid., 724:22-725:1; Southgate, 156).
[51] The *topos* of impotence is well known in Persian literature. In *Vīs u Rāmīn*, King Mūbad becomes impotent due to the use of a talisman by the cunning nurse who has been employed by Vīs, see *VR*, 38, 103:31-104:37.
[52] "چون دختر با شاه اسکندر بخفت ملک اسکندر قصد او کرد، نتوانست بکارت او بستدن", (*IN*, 28:15-16).
[53] Ibid., 27:19-21.
[54] Ibid., 28:17-18.
[55] St. Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk Literature* (Bloomington 1955-1958), motif 15.

falls in love with a girl in the desert[56] and Yārakh falls in love with a lady whom he saw in the bazaar.[57] In other genres of Persian literature the same motif is widely used. In the romance of *Humāy and Humāyūn*, Humāy swoons at the sight of Humāyūn! Alexander does not reach this point of weakness but he stays motionless. When Humāy wakes up, Humāyūn has disappeared. In the case of Arāqīt, she does not disappear and remains to make Alexander's life more difficult.[58] Love at first sight acquires an entertaining character when it is approached in the general context of Alexander's excessive sexual activity.[59] The comic element is also highlighted by the amusing meeting of the furious Alexander and the Brahman.[60]

Besides its association with sexual scenes, the comic aspect of Alexander is also attested in other incidents of Alexander's sexual adventures in Yemen and Andalusia. In the case of Suhayl, when she recognizes him,[61] he feels the threat that she will expose him to the king and, thus, in an internal monologue he says: *'There is no place for meekness, there is only place for manliness'*.[62] In the case of Qaydhāfa, the motif of detection of Alexander's identity by the women who desire him is repeated. As in the case of Suhayl, Alexander feels nervous in front of Qaydhāfa and seeks his sword to show his manliness.[63]

In Turkistān, Alexander's army is provoked and insulted by a young warrior who kills all the fighters who dare encounter him. Only Shāhmalik's war-like young daughter disguised as a male warrior enters the battle and saves Alexander`s reputation twice. The second time, the comic element is strong when Alexander is ready to fight on his own but

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[56] *Samak-i 'ayyār*, I:14.
[57] Ibid., II:101-102.
[58] For the romance Humāy and Humāyūn see J.Ch. Bürgel, 'Humāy and Humāyūn, a Medieval Persian Romance' in *The Proceedings of the First European Conference of Iranian Studies* (Turin, Sept. 7-11, 1987), eds. G. Gnoli and A. Panaino (Rome, 1990), 349.
[59] "پس دختر آزادبخت چون شاه اسکندر را بدید اورا دوست گرفت...", (=*when Āzādbukht's daughter saw him, she fell in love with him...*), *IN*, 28:19.
[60] Ibid., 30:21-32:10.
[61] She has previously seen him in a dream and she falls in love with him. This motif of falling in love without actually having seen the lover is widely used in Persian and world literature. Thompson, *op.cit.*, motif. T11.3. In the case of Khusraw and Shīrīn, they fall in love with each other without direct visual contact. Khusraw falls in love with her on hearing a description while Shīrīn on seeing his portrait falls in love with him, *KS*, 58-64.
[62] "نه جایگاه زبونی است، جای مردی است.", *IN*, 113:11.
[63] Ibid., 194:11-12.

he is forced to remain inactive because Shāhmalik's daughter is quicker than him.[64] Elsewhere, Arslānkhān comically complains to Alexander that the latter has sent Arāqīt against him and hence, he is predictably defeated by her since he *'cannot move a limb'* due to his love for her. This statement is an indirect accusation of Alexander's lack of manliness but what is striking is the interaction of the sexual (Arslānkhān-Arāqīt) and comic elements (Arslānkhān's defeat by Arāqīt).[65]

Thus, through humour, the narrator engages the audience in an interactive scheme: on the one side is Alexander and the love story, and on the other the recipients of his comic messages. More important, the comic element is an eloquent way on the part of the narrator of dealing with sexual themes in public. In literary terms, the epic romance is transformed into a comedy when the love theme comes to the surface. The humour emerging from the love scenes acts as a pleasant interval between the epic scenes and it enriches the monotonous plot of Alexander's endless trips and battles.

Spiritual love

If the *Iskandarnāma* is a rare example of excessive physical love in Persian popular romances and literature (see also the case of Bahrām Gūr in the *Shāhnāma*), the same cannot be said in the case of spiritual love. In particular, the spiritual character of love in the narrative could be associated with the general role of spiritual love in well-known pieces of Persian polite literature, such as *Vīs u Rāmīn*, *Layla u Majnūn* and popular literature such as the *Dārābnāma*.[66] Nevertheless, the *Iskandarnāma* cannot be fully identified in terms of spiritual love with the other accounts. And this is due to the striking coexistence of spiritual and physical elements. The term *spiritual* does not fully represent in this study the notion of Platonic and ideal love. It is identified more with a

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[64] Ibid., 568:16-17.
[65] Ibid., 694:20-695:1.
[66] Arāqīt and Alexander's spiritual love is similar to that of *Layla u Majnūn*, *Vīs u Rāmīn*, expressing the endless quest for acquiring the desirable. However, the issue of the true identity of love in the above polite romances is not clear. In Gurgānī's poem, Vīs and Rāmīn's love could express the quest for Immortality, physical passion or testament to predestination. As Meisami mentions, this question remains unanswered. See J. Scott Meisami, 'Kings and Lovers. Ethical Dimensions of Medieval Persian Romance', *Edebiyat*, 1 (1987), 4. In the *Iskandarnāma*, Arāqīt symbolizes a spiritual value for Alexander, the unknown temptation for him. The conquest of Arāqīt is identified in Alexander's mind and heart with the conquest of the world. For the role of love in the *Dārābnāma*, see M.P. Gunābādī, 'Dārābnāma', *Sukhān*, 12 (1340/1961), 94.

kind of untold and invisible spiritual love combined with strongly visible physical elements. That means that what is defined as *spiritual* is not distinguished from the physical aspect of love. The physical element is attested in every love affair of Alexander. In the case of spiritual love, the physical element acts as the prelude. It is the device serving the development of the spiritual relationship between the two lovers. The case of Alexander and Arāqīt denotes this relation of the physical and spiritual elements. Once he is captivated by her external beauty, Alexander realizes that there is something unknown and undefined in this woman, something that urges him to get closer to her and find out what it really is.

Alexander's love story with Arāqīt dominates the narrative. This spiritual love affair in a sense is strongly associated with Islamic lore and in particular with the love between Solomon and Bilqis (Queen of Sheba). This identification results from the association of the figure of Alexander with Solomon in the narrative.[67] The motif of *Solomon-Bilqis* is also attested in other Persian accounts, such as the romance between Humāy and Humāyūn.[68]

The two lovers and adversaries meet for the first time in battle. When they encounter each other, Alexander falls in love with Arāqīt at first sight.[69] When he sees her, he loses his strength and stands motionless. Their single combat is breathtaking and symbolizes the natural struggle between male and female for predominance. Arāqīt becomes aware of the hero's sexual prowess, when she sends some fairies to spy on Alexander's moves. They report that after Alexander had finished his prayers, he went to bed with a concubine combining thus his spiritual duties with his earthly pleasures.[70] The episodes in the "Arāqīt story" are numerous. Many "twists and turns" occur bringing the lovers together and the next moment setting them apart.[71] Neither Alexander nor Arāqīt

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[67] See p.179.

[68] For the identification of Humāy and Humāyūn with Solomon and Bilqis respectively see Bürgel, 'Humāy and Humāyūn', 350.

[69] *IN*, 358:15-16.

[70] *IN*, 361: 4-5.

[71] The motif of the long delayed union or re-union of lovers is attested in the *Vīs u Rāmīn* and the *Khusraw u Shīrīn*. The role of Mūbad as main obstacle in this union is predominant (*VR* 33). A series of events such as battles, physical love affairs (with Gul, *VR* 74, 317:29) for Rāmīn and other twists and turns intervene, postponing thus his re-union with Vīs. In the *Khusraw u Shīrīn*, the cases of Khusraw and Shakar's physical love affair (and Farḥād's love for Shīrīn) constitute strong obstacles causing trouble and delay in the re-union of the two lovers. See *KS*, 115-266.

admit openly their love. Each one waits for the other's first move. An open acceptance of love would mean loss of prestige and defeat for each of them. Alexander, as male and the glorious Muslim king, is shattered by his feelings for Arāqīt but he displays self-restraint. Arāqīt on the other hand is the fearsome war-like woman, who, as Suhayl, has her own unprecedented pride. She is the queen of the fairies and a charismatic fighter. However, she is vulnerable to human males and this costs her the loss of her pride. After many episodes, she accepts Alexander's supremacy and finally they are married.[72] Their marriage is a victory for Alexander and a sweet defeat for Arāqīt. Alexander manages to subdue the unbeatable queen of fairies not only on the battlefield of war but also on the battlefield of love. Arāqīt is forced by nature to yield to Alexander's male nature. However, their marriage does not mark an end to their struggle for power. In spite of his love for her, Alexander cannot resist polygamy. Arāqīt is determined, however, to adapt herself to Alexander's habits. Now their adversity is to be continued within the frame of marital life.

In the period before their marriage, Alexander confirms his unstable heart for women;[73] he falls in love with the beautiful slave girl who is a princess.[74] He is so influenced by her beauty and her help to him that later on he proposes to marry her.[75] After his marriage to Arāqīt, the latter demands that Alexander be unswervingly faithful to her. Alexander warns her that he cannot do such a thing and he will have as many women as he likes.[76]

After their marriage, things remain tense due to Alexander's restless life. He meets several women, like the maiden in the desert,[77] and he marries one more beautiful woman whom he brings into his camp.[78] His adventures increase his prestige as a *Casanova king* and make the Fairies, the comrades of Arāqīt, acknowledge his superiority

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[72] *IN*, 405:15.

[73] It is the notion of the *King Lover* that is hidden behind Alexander's inclination to polygamy. See p.153. A similar example is that of Khusraw's marriage with Maryam, although Alexander's excessive sexual intercourse is incomparable in extent.

[74] Ibid., 367:9.

[75] Ibid., 367:13. For Gurgānī and Niẓāmī, marriage provides the ultimate symbol of the success or failure of the lover's quest. See Meisami, *op.cit.*, 198. This is also the case for Alexander.

[76] *IN*, 406:20-407:3.

[77] Ibid., 414:18-19.

[78] Ibid., 417:15-16.

not only in the sexual sphere but in every aspect of his life.[79] He even thanks God for His benevolence.[80] The comic element is predominant in these sexual stories involving Alexander. When he sleeps with Shāhmalik's daughter, who has already become his wife, he forces Arāqīt to accept this new reality. Arāqīt has no other choice. It is comic and simultaneously ironic or even cynical to see Arāqīt entering Alexander's tent to take her sword and finding him with another woman sleeping next to him. Arāqīt has accepted her destiny and stoically remains silent in order not to wake him up.[81] Alexander's conquests are endless, so are his new wives. He is so busy satisfying all of them that he needs a strict schedule so as to carry out his duties efficiently and in time! He would spend one night with Qātil's bride, the following night with Qaymūn's daughter and the rest of the week with his concubines.[82]

In spite of his sexual adventures, Alexander is strongly attached to Arāqīt who has the lion's share of his heart and her importance is not expressed verbally but through acts, which are political and not sexual. When, due to particular misfortunes, Alexander is unable to lead his army against the enemy or he is in a moment of weakness, he entrusts Arāqīt with this task. And Arāqīt always makes sure to fulfil Alexander's expectations by leading his army to victory against Arslānkhān, the Gog and Magog, Shāhmalik and others of his enemies.[83]

Alexander and Arāqīt's spiritual love resembles an island in the vast sea of Alexander's endless physical love affairs. For the hero, Arāqīt is the only woman who stimulates his real interest and personifies the perfect being for him. Love for Alexander, through his personal experience with Arāqīt, is a kind of earthly force with spiritual dimensions.[84] Their spiritual attraction is attested through their strong attachment to each other, in spite of several threats against their relationship (Alexander's indulgence in

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[79] Ibid., 556:4-6.

[80] "ای خدای دانای پردرد گار توانا نکردی خیچ کس را در جهان بهرمتدتر از این بنده ! سپاس و شکر تو چون گزارم؟" (=*Omniscient Master and powerful, able Creator! You have benefited your servant more than anyone else. How can I thank you enough?*, ibid., 417:14-15).

[81] Ibid., 589:7.

[82] Ibid., 724:22-725:1.

[83] Ibid., 632:4-5; 704:7-9; 691:16-18.

[84] About the importance of love, Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī in the *Akhlāq-i Nāṣirī* claims that love arises from man's natural predestination towards perfection and from his awareness that he cannot achieve this goal alone. See Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, *The Nasirean Ethics*, trans. G.M. Wickens (London, 1964), 196.

physical love with other women, the evil intentions of their opponents and so on)[85]. Arāqīt is the device that leads Alexander to the ultimate effect of spiritual love, his self-awareness.[86] Arāqīt becomes his 'alter ego'; this is clearly demonstrated by the important role she plays in Alexander's campaign. The fact that she substitutes for Alexander in the leading position of his army when he is not available implies the magnitude of trust and appreciation Alexander displays for his wife. But if this is an example associated with politics, Arāqīt's predominant importance for Alexander on a personal level is clearly expressed through his jealousy and concern for her feelings toward Ṭafqāj, Shāhmalik's son.[87] This is the only case in the narrative where Arāqīt's devotion to Alexander is threatened by her feelings for another man. It is also the only case where Alexander becomes jealous. Thus, the hero who almost every day expresses his restless character in the arena of love finds himself in the difficult position of being suspicious of Arāqīt for committing adultery with Ṭafqāj.[88] In fact, Arāqīt never betrays her feelings and devotion

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[85] The so-called *obstacles to love* are a common motif in medieval Persian romances. This motif is strongly related to the tradition of Hellenistic romances. Some of the basic features of these obstacles are the abduction of the bride on the eve of the wedding, absence of parental consent, the lovers' flight, their journey, a different bridegroom or sexual adversary and the like. See Davis, *Panthea's Children*, 41-42. However, in the case of Alexander and Arāqīt the same motif has other features. There is no abduction of the bride or journey. The *obstacles in Love* in the *Iskandarnāma* are divided into two categories: those before the marriage and those after it. The first ones here are mainly the egoism and pride of the heroes. The heroine Arāqīt displays 'man-like' egoism equal to that of Alexander. This egoism justifies her defensive, or aggressive, attitude, and the subsequent extensive warfare against Alexander (*IN*, 359:14). But egoism is eventually subdued to the superiority of love. The second category of obstacles deals with the marital life of the heroes. These are very limited because the couple live mostly in harmony, constantly fighting together against the infidels. Arāqīt's pride after her marriage is still shaken because of Alexander's polygamy. Ṭafqāj is the only man in the narrative who seduces Arāqīt and negatively influences her relationship with Alexander (ibid., 582:5-7). This temptation is temporary and includes some of the obstacles attested in the Hellenistic tradition, such as the flight (Arāqīt escapes from Alexander) and the sexual adversary (Ṭafqāj). Shortly after, however, Alexander and Arāqīt are re-united due to Alexander's concern for her and mainly due to Arāqīt's acknowledgement of her mistake.

[86] Meisami, *Persian Court Poetry*, 137.

[87] *IN*, 554:11.

[88] The theme of treachery is widely used in the *Iskandarnāma*: Māhāfarīn betrays her father for Alexander's sake (ibid., 29:4-5). The literary motif of the princess and daughter betraying her king and father is a folkloric motif also attested in the story with Shāpūr II and the daughter of the Arab phylarch al-Dayzan of Ḥatra. See Ṭabarī, *The History of Al-Tabari, vol. V: The Sasanids, the Byzantines, the Lakhmids and Yemen*, trans. C.E. Bosworth (New York, 1999), 31-36. In another case, a tragic irony occurs with the slave girl that Arāqīt trusts the most and who will again betray her *(IN*, 365:18-19)! Arāqīt repeats the same mistake by confessing to the slave girl that she will attack Alexander's camp at midnight (ibid., 396:6-8). The case of the sexual attraction between Arāqīt and Ṭafqāj will make Alexander suspect Arāqīt of betrayal (ibid., 579:5-6 and 582:5-7).

for Alexander whose heart, in spite of his comic sexual instability. is essentially devoted to her.[89]

It is evident that the type of spiritual love between Alexander and Arāqīt is close to the model of spiritual love of other 'more polite' accounts, but it is certainly not to be totally identified with them for one specific reason: the popular and entertaining mission of the *Iskandarnāma*. The narrative serves as an ephemeral entertainment rather than a means of stimulating the audience's intellectual interest. Thus, love reflects not only private experience but also public conduct. It is used as a mirror of broad ethical issues involving problems of social interaction.

Niẓāmī aims to guide his reader to the discovery of unknown intellectual paths. Through his highly sophisticated techniques he attracts the full concentration of his reader in order to achieve the advancement of the latter's intellectual world and the creation or reflection of social exempla.[90] This is the type of love that Niẓāmī promotes in his accounts. This is not exactly the case with the *Iskandarnāma* since its mission is not to educate in a philosophical way but to entertain in a simple manner. Spiritual love in the *Iskandarnāma* could be called 'less spiritual' compared to *Layla u Majnūn* or *Khusraw u Shīrīn* for many reasons: first, there is no self-renunciation by Alexander, since he considers his ego more important than Arāqīt;[91] second, there is no notion of justice in

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[89] If Alexander's devotion to Arāqīt is to be compared with Rāmīn's devotion to Vīs in Gurgānī's account, then Alexander can be characterized as less devoted. In both romances, physical love is predominant, since in *Vīs u Rāmīn* the two lovers sleep often together, in spite of not being married. Rāmīn falls in love through *a coup de foudre*:

'ز عشق اندر دلش آتش فروزد بر آتش عقل صبرش را بسوزد' *(= Love put his heart in fire and the fire in his mind burnt (his) patience)* [*VR*, 32, 86-90, trans. Morrison, 32].
He constantly declares that he has no control over his situation. On the contrary, the figures of Arāqīt and Vīs are somehow identical. They both allow themselves to return their love only after due deliberation, and, once committed, never swerve from their devotion to him. They guide their lovers toward self-realization. For *Vīs u Rāmīn*'s love, see Meisami, *op.cit.*, 143-144.

[90] Meisami, 'Kings and Lovers', 4. In the *Layla u Majnūn* their love is never to be realized and it goes against the social conventions, since Layla's family opposes their union and betroths her to another man. This clash between Majnūn's passion and the social conventions forms the backbone of the love drama in Niẓāmī's poem.

In the case of *Vīs u Rāmīn* love is a private passion with overlapping demands coming from society. Sexual intercourse outside of the marital bond makes Gurgānī's romance a shockingly 'heretical' account reflecting or promoting this crucial taboo of the Islamic society. See Davis, *Panthea's Children*, 56.

[91] The classic example of Majnūn's total self-renunciation [with his withdrawal to the desert and his life as a beast (بیموس و بیقرار و بیخواب= *without happiness, concordance and sleep*) resulting from the lack of his lover (*LM*, 102-107) is not attested in Alexander's love for Arāqīt. This happens for two reasons: first,

Alexander and Arāqīt's relationship, because Alexander endlessly pursues polygamy. What constitutes Alexander and Arāqīt's relationship as spiritual love is the submission to love by both lovers and the supreme role that Arāqīt plays in Alexander's life. In literary terms, their relationship could be called 'spiritual love serving entertainment and not meditation'. The narrator does not hesitate to present openly a sexual Alexander satisfying the appetite of his audience. Thus, love aims to entertain the audience in a cheerful manner and take them away from any troubles. It is for this reason that the physical element plays a vital role in the narrative and interacts with the spiritual type of love.

Expression of Love: Words and War-like women

The aim of the romance is to unfold the lovers' feelings and lead them to their union. Love in the narrative is promoted and expressed mainly through words and acts. With regard to words, it is the monologue[92] that is used frequently by the narrator in order to express the internal world of the lovers, and specifically the protagonist, Alexander. Alexander's emotions and thoughts for Arāqīt are ingeniously provided by means of internal monologue. When Arāqīt sends him a provocative message, he thinks *"...if I tolerate this, she will grow bold and she will say that 'he is afraid'... "*.[93] In other cases dialogue is the means which enables the lovers to encounter each other. When Alexander is captured in Arāqīt's hands in a garden, he admonishes her *"Do not behave in this manner. If you set me free and return my chiefs to me, I will leave tomorrow and depart from your kingdom"*.[94] These words show that, while in captivity, Alexander aims through dialogue to free himself. Thus, the interaction between the two lovers out of the

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Alexander is the 'King Lover' (see chapter on Kingship) and he cannot subdue openly his majesty to Arāqīt, and second, self-renunciation is against the scope of the *Iskandarnāma* to be entertaining. On the contrary, Alexander's adamantly proud attitude to Arāqīt constitutes a comic element in the narrative. This different approach between Niẓāmī's account and the *Iskandarnāma* reflects the multiple literary and social role of love, as a point for intellectual exploration and improvement (Niẓāmī) and for pure entertainment (*Iskandarnāma*). For the issue of self-renunciation in general, see Meisami, *op.cit.*, 6.

[92] Monologue is a well-known technique in Persian romances. Rāmīn says to himself: *"What if fair fortune once more showed me the face of that Moon?"*, *VR*, 32:39, 88. For the internal monologue motif, see Meisami, *op.cit.*, 83.

[93] "اگر من مدارا کنم او مستولی گردد و گوید از من بترسید", *IN*, 360:8-9.

[94] "...مکن و دست از من باز دار و امیران مرا با من ده تا من فردا کوچ کنم و از ولایت تو بیرون روم.". ibid., 362:10-11.

battlefield becomes stronger. In this case, the role of the garden is important in the unfolding of sensuality in a Paradise-like environment. The imagery of the garden represents a Paradise-like vision, the ideal world for Arāqīt who holds her beloved in the captivity of *bihisht*.[95] Both internal monologue and dialogue serve the unfolding of the lovers' feelings, thoughts and intentions. Monologue reveals the secrets in the heroes' mind, while external dialogue increases the heat of the action and makes their confrontation more vivid. However, words are only a means of expressing feelings and bringing the two lovers closer to their union.

Another means is acts, and in particular, warfare or single combat which is a metaphor of love in Persian romances.[96] This is reflected in literature through the motif of the *war-like (or warrior-like) woman* which is widely attested in Classical Persian literature.[97] This motif reflects a contrast to the Muslim social stereotype of the woman's seclusion.[98] Concerning the typology of this motif, the war-like woman has been trained in the arts of combat and fighting. She personifies the perfect model of a desirable female: beautiful, chaste, young, deceitful and full of energy. She is always from the upper social class and, although she is a skilful fighter, warfare is not her profession. She fights only occasionally and when there is an urgent situation and threat against her or her close relatives (usually father) or kingdom. In the narrative, the number of war-like women is restricted but their role is important.[99] This motif is also widely attested in Arabic epic romances (Sīrat), such as those of *Dhāt al-Himma, Ḥasan of Baṣra* and others.[100]

Alexander's encounter with Arāqīt is an endless combat on the battlefield. Alexander is the intruder and Arāqīt the defender. Alexander's persistence in trying to

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[95] For the role of the garden in Persian romances, see J. Scott Meisami, 'The Body as Garden: Nature and Sexuality in Persian Poetry', *Edebiyat,* 6 (1995), 276.
[96] Hanaway, 'Formal Elements', 153-154.
[97] War as a metaphor for love is also attested in the *Vīs u Rāmīn* in the case of Mūbad and his adversary Vīrū who combat for Vīs' heart, *VR* 20. As Meisami comments, the battle scene conveys a moral judgment on the combatants and a general indictment of the use of violence to achieve personal ends. See Meisami, *op.cit.,* 101.
[98] About this stereotype, see L. Ahmed, *Women and Gender in Islam* (New Haven, 1992), 103.
[99] M. Gaillard, 'Héroïnes d'exception: Les femmes 'ayyār dans la prose romanesque de l'Iran médiéval', *St.Ir.*, 34 (2005), 164-165.
[100] R. Kruk, 'Warrior Women in Arabic Popular Romance: Qannāṣa Bint Muzāḥim and other valiant ladies', *JAL,* 24 (1993), 214-231; eadem, 'The Bold and the Beautiful: Women and 'Fitna' in the Sīrat Dhāt al-himma: The Story of Nūrā', in *Women in the Medieval Islamic World,* ed. G.R.G. Hambly (New York, 1998), 100-103.

capture Arāqīt's kingdom, while in fact he can bypass it without any further trouble. symbolizes the inevitable attraction of the two lovers. Land, for Alexander, symbolizes Arāqīt herself and the conquest of land corresponds to the sexual conquest of her queen. This conquest, however, is not to be achieved in a short time and easily. Alexander's opponent in battle and his desire in love is an accomplished and courageous fighter.

As has already been mentioned, love grows for Arāqīt in Alexander's heart at first sight. Their first meeting takes place on the battlefield and this is the place where their symbolic love encounter will take place in the rest of the episode. Arāqīt in the *Iskandarnāma* represents the well known motif of the valiant war-like woman in Persian literature.[101] Her military skill and behaviour suggest similarity to an Amazon: She is the queen of an unknown land inhabited only by female fairies who are all war-like and they fight from the saddle of their horses. This similarity becomes obvious from the very beginning.[102] Arāqīt on horseback attacks Alexander, attempting to take him by the belt and unhorse him. However, she cannot approach Alexander. Then, he counter-attacks, catches her by her belt and while he is about to tear her from her horse, Arāqīt gathers all her strength and tears her belt.[103] The fairies intervene and help Arāqīt escape from Alexander's hand. This is the first combat between the two lovers and it ends in a draw. This equilibrium of power between the two sides continues in several battles throughout the rest of the narrative.

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[101] In the *Shāhnāma*, it is Gurdāfrid who encounters Suhrāb in single combat. Gurdāfrid defends an independent fortress on behalf of her father, wears male armour and clothes, and without revealing her sex she challenges the attacker to single combat. When Suhrāb eventually takes her captive he realizes that she is a woman in disguise and thus he becomes annoyingly embarrassed. Gurdāfrid argues that it would be better to let her go than to risk the gibes of his fellows when they learn he has been fighting a woman. See J. Clinton, 'The Uses of Guile in the Shahnamah', *Iranian Studies,* 32 (1999), 228-229; Winchester, the Marchionesse of, *Heroines of Ancient Iran* (London, 1954), 28-30. In the *Dārābnāma*, Burāndukht personifies the model of a war-like lady against Alexander. See *DN,* I:467; Niẓāmī, *Sharafnāma,* 288; W.L. Hanaway, 'Anahita and Alexander', *JAOS,* 102 (1982), 287.

[102] As Perry states, the model of a war-like woman is another form of the motif of the lone Amazon. The archetype of the Amazon consists of two parts: first, the fact or threat of a war-like woman doing battle with an established hero; and second, the argument that he dare not risk failure, or even compromise his masculine pride and sense of chivalry, by accepting her challenge on equal terms. Both she and her male opponents know that the code of *javānmardī* reserves the active, martial role for the man, while at the same time enjoining him to act protectively toward the "weaker" sex. In Gurdāfrid's case, she ignores the rules imposed by the traditional sex roles. See J.R. Perry, 'Blackmailing Amazons and Dutch Pigs: A Consideration of Epic and Folktale Motifs in Persian Historiography', *Iranian Studies,* 19 (1986), 158-159; about the similar profile of the Amazon-like warrior women and the issue of the relations between the two sexes in the Arabic literary tradition, see Kruk, *op.cit.*, 226-229.

[103] *IN,* 358:18-19.

The same motif of the war-like woman also occurs in Alexander`s visit to Yemen where he encounters Princess Suhayl, another of his conquests. Like Arāqīt, he falls in love with Suhayl at first sight.[104] Alexander likes her but there is something about her of which he does not approve; she is very active and is the classic paradigm of the heroic war-like woman in the *Iskandarnāma*.[105] Alexander wants women to be secluded at home.[106] In fact he forbids them from horse-riding, which is a sign of sinful behaviour. The brave and proud Suhayl clearly states to Alexander that *"I am Suhayl of Yemen and King Mundhar's daughter. When I am in the saddle, I can unhorse 100 men with my spear and bring them to the ground"*.[107] The warlike princess visits Alexander in his chamber at night and she reveals that she is aware of his real identity. Then Alexander, afraid that she might reveal his secret to the king of Yemen, puts her into chains. The case of Suhayl is different from that of Arāqīt in that while she is in love with Alexander, the latter displays only physical love for her. Her war-like virtue is not used against Alexander, as happens with Arāqīt, but is displayed in single combats against noble horsemen before Alexander's eyes. Suhayl's aim is to impress Alexander with her military skill. Following the literary pattern of all fearless war-like women, she disguises herself as a male fighter who has his face covered. This is the only way for her to participate in the fighting. Her disguise creates a mystery about herself. When she enters the field against the son of the king of Makrān, she displays great skilfulness with the lance and in horsemanship. All these attributes and her beauty increase Alexander's love for her.[108] This happens in spite of her disguise as a man. With hyperbole the narrator supports the magnitude of Suhayl's beauty and military skill. Eventually, and after several obstacles and delays, Alexander marries Suhayl who complies with his demands.

Shāhmalik's daughter is the third case of a brave war-like woman. Before the battle of Alexander and Shāhmalik's armies, she appears on the battlefield disguised as a male warrior and manages to defeat the brave Turk of Shāhmalik's army.[109] This Turk had up to that point embarrassed Alexander and his army by killing every soldier who

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[104] Ibid., 110:1-2.
[105] Ibid., 109:21.
[106] Ibid., 121:19-122:2.
[107] "گفت سهیل یمنم و دختر شاه منذرم و چون سوار گردم صد مردرا به نیزه از پیش برانم و بر زمین افکانم.", ibid., 112:18-19.
[108] Ibid., 117:2-3.
[109] Ibid., 568:16-18.

dared to face him in single combat. The maiden's military ability is associated with her devout character.

The fourth and last example of a war-like woman in the narrative is Yāqūtmalik. She is the last woman who appeals to Alexander's sexual instinct in the narrative. Like other war-like women, she displays the perfect combination of a desirable woman according to medieval standards: her beauty is proverbial,[110] an extremely capable fighter, graceful and chaste. Yāqūtmalik's nature is close to that of Arāqīt: she is of semi-fairy descent and far more beautiful than Arāqīt. In fact, the two women become fierce adversaries for mastery of Alexander's heart. Alexander appreciates Yāqūtmalik`s virginity[111] and thus a new round of fights and jealousy begins between her and Arāqīt.[112] It is jealousy, another form of sexual struggle (this time between the two females for a male), that will unfold the military skilfulness and war-like nature of Yāqūtmalik and Arāqīt. They will fight in a fruitless single combat which lasts all day long until the evening prayer.[113] This equilibrium of power promotes Yāqūtmalik's profile in the narrative because she becomes equal to the glorious Arāqīt. Yāqūtmalik, however, is a different example of a skilled war-like woman. Although she is in love with Alexander, she basically does not have the chance to unite with Alexander. She attempts badly to express her love but this expression is released through her fighting. This has the opposite result. While Yāqūtmalik aims to charm Alexander with her beauty and military virtue, she achieves the contrary. Her love is transformed into hate and hostile relations between her and Alexander. It is the only case in the narrative where a woman in love with Alexander makes him hate her and not love her. But again, war-like behaviour is a device for the expression and unfolding of love.

Closely associated with the theme of war-like women is the role of women in general in the narrative. As shown above, the physical aspect of love creates a sensual image of the women participating in the plot. However, as the type of physical love implies, women appear only as objects of physical desire, an object of love and egoistic satisfaction for the hero. With the exception of the war-like women above, woman is

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[110] She had given hope to 100,000 princes, ibid., 749:12.

[111] "...و همچنین به مهر دختری بود..."(=-... *and she had the seal of virginity...*), ibid., 749:13.

[112] Ibid., 761:19.

[113] Ibid., 762:11-12.

never the protagonist and she becomes a vehicle for the promotion of sexual frames in each episode. A woman is at the centre of the hero's action, but after the end of the episode, each woman does not appear again.

The war-like women, on the other hand, break the general rule of women as secondary actors in this narrative and play the role of the protagonist on an equal basis with Alexander. From the four warlike women, only Arāqīt manages to remain a protagonist. Suhayl, Shāhmalik's daughter and Yāqūtmalik play an important role, each one in their story but nothing beyond it. After the end of the story they are thrown into oblivion by the narrator. However, Arāqīt is the only case of a woman in the narrative who plays a constantly predominant role and becomes Alexander's *alter ego*, a common feature in pre-Safavid prose romances.[114] Her active fighting role after her marriage is in accordance with the profile of war-like women in Arabic literature who also do not fade from public life.[115]

Moreover, a striking motif in the narrative is the femininity of the war-like woman, a motif also attested in Arabic romances.[116] Her beauty is over-emphasized and she consciously makes use of her feminine dimension in battle. This causes Alexander's confusion when he comes to intimate contact with her. Her dazzling beauty initially makes the hero fail in his attempt to defeat the warlike-woman. After all, it is mostly her beauty rather than her strength that defeats him.

In general, love in the *Iskandarnāma* must be examined in association with its general image in the various genres of medieval Persian literary tradition. The *Iskandarnāma* is an inseparable part of this tradition and, as a popular text, adds something new to the already known data about love in medieval Iran. It provides the reader in a vivid way with the popular concept of love in pre-Mongol Iran. It implicitly reflects the notion of presenting the sexual element openly and without taboos. It is obvious that entertainment at that time, as nowadays, was a moment of free expression of several issues that were not discussed publicly on other occasions. Story-telling either in public or in a more restricted cycle, in court for example, gave the opportunity to the story-teller and his

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[114] Hanaway, 'Formal Elements', 157.
[115] Kruk, *op.cit.*, 228.
[116] Ibid., 227; Gaillard, *op.cit.*, 179-181.

audience to communicate without reservations on both aspects of love, spiritual and physical.

In literary terms, love in the *Iskandarnāma* as a fundamental manifestation of the romantic genre appears as one of the central themes, equally important to the martial epic scenes. Thus, it does not follow the pattern of polite literature where love creates a balance against the martial epic scenes. For example, Firdawsī integrates the love scenes into the standard strand of epic scenes of feasting and hunting.[117] The relation between the spiritual and physical love in the narrative is of great importance for the nature of the *Iskandarnāma* as a genre of semi-popular literature. The coexistence of the physical and spiritual manifestations of love in the *Iskandarnāma* reflects a duality which goes beyond the quality of love itself and deals mainly with the types of love in their social context. In particular, physical love is predominant in the narrative while spiritual love is restricted only to the affair between Alexander and Arāqīt. Moreover, the relationship between Alexander and Suhayl is physical in nature but their combat gives the impression that their episode perhaps expressed a more spiritual type of love. Anyhow, the physical element is a theme appealing to general audiences. This becomes evident through the lack of any elaborate technique by the narrator in the presentation of the physical stories. Moreover, the comic element associated with the physical type of love corresponds to the main aim of the narrator, to entertain the audience. Thus, physical love in the *Iskandarnāma* could be associated or even identified with the popular character of the narrative.

In contrast, Alexander and Arāqīt's story reflects the type of 'serious' spiritual love which in its essence and nucleus is in full accordance with the image of spiritual love in Persian polite literary tradition. Nevertheless, this noble kind of love is not presented in a 'noble' and 'elaborate' way in the narrative. Spiritual love is detected and implicitly provided within the context of the narrative. The popular character of the *Iskandarnāma* does not allow the polite character of spiritual love to be expressed in a stylistic way. The comic element dominates this love affair too and attributes a popular image to spiritual love.

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[117] Hanaway, 'The Iranian Epics', 86.

Thus, the co-existence of popular and polite elements in the *Iskandarnāma* denotes the dual character of the narrative with the popular element being predominant. Hence, The coexistence of physical and spiritual love reflects the interaction of popular and polite literary elements in the narrative. This co-existence expresses the fusion of the various common literary elements and denotes the formation of a narrative based on this fusion. The analysis of the love theme proves that the *Iskandarnāma* is a 'popular' account with many 'polite' features, the result of a protracted process of fusion and development of the oral and literary aspects of its tradition.

Epilogue

Given that so far no analysis of the content of the *Iskandarnāma* has been produced, the aim of this dissertation has been to deal with the narrative itself and to shed light on various aspects which have so far remained unknown. The simple linguistic style of the *Iskandarnāma* creates the initial impression that its content is also not rich in terms of stories, themes, *topoi* and various concepts. The analysis in this thesis suggests this is not the case. The *Iskandarnāma,* an epic prose romance, was written to entertain and it is a treasury full of religious, political and social concepts expressed through the legendary life of Alexander. These concepts are harmoniously interwoven with the pre-Islamic Iranian tradition of kings and Islamic lore.

The analysis includes a wide range of topics which are divided into three categories. The analysis of the literary tradition of the narrative points to the connection of the *Iskandarnāma* with the Greek tradition of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* romance, the historical circumstances under which the narrative was compiled and the direct relation between the *Iskandarnāma* and Firdawsī's masterpiece. Another aspect of the narrative's importance is its material about the model of the proper king and Muslim conqueror. The account is also rich in general concepts which form the framework in which the hero acts: the battle of man against his ephemeral nature, the notion of chivalry and the role of love as a metaphor of the quest for self-knowledge. Another contribution of this dissertation is its brief analysis of the language of the narrative which helps to give a more complete image of the account and the time in which it was compiled.

On another issue, referring to Persian prose romances, Hanaway mentions that

> 'Hitherto this (picture of Medieval Persian culture) has been a one-sided picture because the documents have all come from court-supported historians, literary critics, secretaries and panegyrists. Now the popular side of Persian culture can receive more attention and the twentieth century student of Persia's past will be able to see that past in a new light.'[1]

Apparently Hanaway believes that the popular character of prose romances reflects a literary movement 'from below', a movement independent of the ruling elite. He thinks that these romances reflect purely folk beliefs and they were produced

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[1] Hanaway, 289.

amongst the masses, through the help of storytellers and scribes who compiled oral traditions. Hanaway's point is debatable.

As the analysis of the *Iskandarnāma* has shown, the term 'popular' can be used only in regard to the language of the narrative, which is indeed simple. This simple style does not mean that the narrative was written only for the common people and not for the ruling elite. The *Iskandarnāma* was written primarily for entertainment. It could be recited on a daily basis in public places and in private but since it was destined to entertain it is right that it should to have been written in a simple language. This does not exclude the court or provincial aristocracy or urban upper classes (merchants) as an audience for the *Iskandarnāma*. Thus the simple style of the narrative is not a safe guide to define the social circumstances which led to its creation.

The richness and complexity of the content of the narrative are not in accordance with the term 'popular'. Hanaway considers the content of pre-Safavid romances *'linear, open-ended, flexible and unsophisticated in structure'*.[2] In the case of the *Iskandarnāma* the content has the above feature but, as shown in chapter three its structure is not unsophisticated. Although it does not have the same structure with genres of polite literature (the historical or poetical accounts), the *Iskandarnāma* is intimately associated and reflects a historical context. Apparently, some of the secondary stories and the legends might have had an oral background, but, when the narrative was compiled, these stories were already written down and were recited. However, most of the material in the narrative comes from various written sources, such as the *Shāhnāma, the Siyar al-Mulūk, 'Unṣurī's works, the Isrā'īliyyāt* tradition and so on. Hence, the *Iskandarnāma* reflects more or less the same content as accounts of polite literature do.

Regarding the creation of the romance, storytelling was certainly a vital source for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* (for example the case of the King of Egypt). But this does not mean that the whole narrative is created (although it could have been later elaborated and transmitted) by a professional storyteller as Hanaway suggests. Hanaway also identifies the presence of the author in the narrative with the voice of

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[2] Idem, 'Formal Elements', 142.

the storyteller.[3] However, there is no clear evidence in the narrative, suggesting that the author is an actual storyteller. As attested in the narrative, the romance was produced from various manuscripts, a clear evidence of literary activity. That implies a time-consuming and systematic effort by the author and the subsequent scribes to produce a readable narrative based on oral and written sources, especially in the case of the first author in the early eleventh century. The literary nature of the above sources for the early compilation of the *Iskandarnāma* is also reflected in the rich and complicated *repertoire* of stories. The occasional inconsistency in the structure of the narrative and the addition of inserted stories could be the result of the recompilations that the narrative underwent by various scribes.

The early compilation of the narrative and its recompilations could not have been achieved without patronage. There is a lack of evidence in regard to the precise circumstances which formed the relationship between the patron and the man of letters in pre-Safavid Iran. Similarly there is no evidence that literature was sponsored by any middle-class citizens. By contrast, it is certain that the promotion of literature, arts and sciences in medieval Iran was a privilege of the ruling elite, either the court or the local aristocracy (*dihqāns*). Libraries and scriptoria were functioning under the auspices of the ruler, the amīr (Sāmānids), the sulṭān, or the provincial governor. Thus everything that was produced there represented the initiatives of the political and scholarly elites. The compilation of a legendary account based both on pre-existing written manuscripts and oral stories was more likely to have been produced in the court, a provincial palace or library under the aegis of a political figure. The compilation of a manuscript at that time was an expensive and illustrious project which could not have been produced without support. Hence, it is very difficult to accept Hanaway's point that these romances, including the *Iskandarnāma*, give a substantially different image of reality because they came exactly from the same power centres where polite literature was produced. The simple style of the *Iskandarnāma* reflects the aim of the work to entertain rather than the social circumstances of its creation.

Aside from being an entertainment text, this epic romance is a legendary account of Alexander's life. Its legendary elements are of pre-Islamic and Islamic

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[3] Ibid., 143

origin both from the Greek and Persian traditions. However, under the legendary surface of the narrative there is a strong historical dimension. This is detected mainly in two areas: the first deals with the literary tradition about the hero itself, particularly the fact that the legendary version comes from a historical core of Alexander's life. The second area deals with the historical context of the narrative. The phrase 'historical context' refers to the historical circumstances (political situation, place of compilation) and concepts of the author which led to the creation of the *Iskandarnāma*. The analysis of the date of the narrative has shown that the historical context plays a vital role in the formation of the romance. Thus apart from its entertaining and legendary character, it is suggested here that the *Iskandarnāma* contains valuable historical information and the narrative must be also interpreted according to its historical context.

According to the traditional view in the twentieth century, medieval Islamic historical accounts were approached only in terms of style and other philological aspects and as *'uninterpretive mines of factual information'*.[4] Hence, historical texts were only superficially used and not in regard to their historical context and the concepts of the authors.[5] This view coexisted with other perspectives which did not acknowledge the importance of the Persian historical tradition in pre-Islamic and Islamic times.[6] Gradually these concepts were disputed and replaced by new ones. Today, the importance of Persian historical writing has been acknowledged.[7] Generally, history is seen as an auxiliary science in the Islamic educational system, aiming to edify the reader about the recurrent phenomena in the evolution of time and how to avoid them in the present.[8] The most important aspect of the new approach of Persian historical writing is that of Waldman who supported the theory that Persian historical accounts of pre-Mongol Iran must be seen in regard to their historical

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[4] M.R. Waldman, *Toward a Theory of Historical Narrative: A Case Study in Perso-Islamicate Historiography* (Ohio, 1980), 3.
[5] Meisami, *Persian Historiography*, 2-3.
[6] H.A.R. Gibb, 'Ta'rīkh' in *Studies on the Civilization of Islam*, eds. S.J. Shaw and W.R. Polk, Princeton 1982[2] (1962), 116-117; B. Spuler, 'The Evolution of Persian Historiography', in *Historians of the Middle East*, eds., B. Lewis and P. M. Holt (London, 1962), 126-127.
[7] Meisami, *op.cit.*, 4-5.
[8] K. Allin Luther, 'Islamic Rhetoric and the Persian Historians, 1000-1300 AD', in *Studies in Near Eastern Culture and History in Memory of Ernest T. Adel-Massih* (Ann Arbor, 1990), 96; Meisami, *op.cit.*, 10-11.

context and the concepts of their authors. These concepts are indirectly revealed through various rhetorical schemes in the narrative.[9]

The theory of historical context in historical writing in the pre-Mongol period has many similarities with the analysis of this thesis about the historicity of the *Iskandarnāma*. It is true that Waldman's analysis is based mainly on the complicated and highly elaborated style (metaphors, images, syntax and so on) of historical accounts of the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The *Iskandarnāma* does not have this complicated style but this does not mean that it does not reflect its historical context. The author of the prose romance employs methods which are attested both in prose romances and historical accounts: the role of structure,[10] didacticism[11] and esotericism. Apart from these common features between historical accounts and the *Iskandarnāma*, the author of the romance uses legend (pre-Islamic and Islamic lore) and various themes (*topoi*) both to form a readable narrative and to associate it indirectly with the historical context of his lifetime. It is within this context that the legendary image of Alexander is used as a metaphor of Sulṭān Maḥmūd's life and rule in the *Iskandarnāma*. The content and the various techniques that the author employs in the romance suggest that the narrative was probably written in the early eleventh century in eastern Iran under the aegis either of Maḥmūd or one of his successors. It could also have been written in a provincial centre by order of a local ruler or *dihqān*.

From the above features, the concept of 'esotericism', as Waldman calls the principle of *taqiyya*, is important and it is also attested in the *Iskandarnāma*.[12] According to Waldman, some historians employed dissimulation or concealment of their true opinions and beliefs about political and religious issues.[13] This method involved the use of various features, such as historical paradigms and ambiguous phrases.

It is noteworthy that the above common techniques between historical writing and the *Iskandarnāma* are not used in a similar fashion. In historical accounts they are used in a more stylised fashion (metaphors for past events used as examples of the historical context). The simple style of the *Iskandarnāma* cannot be compared with that of historical accounts. In the romance the same features are used in the forms of a

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[9] Waldman, *op.cit.*, 6-16; Julie Scott Meisami, 'History as Literature', *Iranian Studies*, 33 (2000), 29-30.
[10] See pp.67-68; Waldman, *op.cit.*, 12-14.
[11] See pp.201-209; Waldman, *op.cit.*, 9-10.
[12] *IN*, 409:6-7.
[13] Waldman, *op.cit.*, 10-12.

simple story, the arrangement and structure of stories and through comparison. for example between Alexander and Sulṭān Maḥmūd. Hence, the above features are used in an adjusted form, depending on the nature of each genre.

In sum, it is hoped that the preceding analysis, which is not exhaustive, has displayed the importance of the *Iskandarnāma* as a prose romance. containing valuable legendary and historical material and acting as a mirror of both the legendary pre-Islamic past of Iran and also of contemporary developments in eastern and Central Asia in Islamic times. Although not important stylistically, this account conceals many secrets of lore and history, showing that it was written mainly for entertainment, it was also didactic and revealed contemporary historical developments. It is also hoped that more questions have been raised in this dissertation. questions that can lead to a debate and further examination of the rich content of the *Iskandarnāma* in the future.

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Appendix.

i. The language of the narrative

The main feature of popular prose romances, including the *Iskandarnāma*, is their simple language and style which are contrary to the highly elaborated style of Persian polite literature in pre-Safavid Iran. The differences between polite and popular literature are syntactical, morphological, phonological and lexical: no rare and difficult Arabic words or phrases, repetitiveness, unevenness of style, no highly poetic devices and sophisticated rhetorical schemes.[1] These narratives display an affinity with oral tradition and they have been preserved and reproduced in a written medium, linking Persian oral and literary traditions. These romances are not examples of the canonical stratum of Persian literature because of their method of compilation, transmission and stylistic features. Hence, the study of the content and language of these romances so far have remained on the periphery of modern research compared to the study of the language of prose accounts in polite Persian literature. The culmination of research on the language of Persian polite prose accounts is Gilbert Lazard's classical work.[2] Although the language of polite literature is more attractive to research due to the high standards of style and literary elaboration, the language of the so-called 'popular' literature should not remain on the margin of contemporary scholarship.

The aim of this short analysis is to bolster the study of the language of these popular prose romances by briefly analysing the language of the *Iskandarnāma*. In particular, the following pages provide a panorama of the main lexical, morphological and syntactical phenomena of the *Iskandarnāma*. It must be emphasised that the language of the *Iskandarnāma* has been already studied by M.T. Bahār and Ī. Afshār.[3] Both Bahār and Afshār's sections on the language of the *Iskandarnāma* are very useful and essential but they lack a systematic arrangement of the material analysed. The fact that their works were produced in Persian poses a problem in case a Western (non-Iranianist) scholar or reader who, being unaware of the Persian language, would like to study the linguistic style of the *Iskandarnāma*. This analysis aims to help in

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[1] Hanaway, 274.
[2] G. Lazard, *La langue des plus anciens monuments de la prose persane* (Paris, 1963).
[3] Bahār, *Sabkshināsī*, 2:128-151; *IN*, introd., 29-36.

this and moreover to provide a more systematic arrangement of the linguistic material attested in the *Iskandarnāma*.

The Iskandarnāma

One of the merits of the simplified style of the *Iskandarnāma* and other Persian romances is that they provide valuable information about what Persian oral speech sounded like at that time. Although written language, even in its simple form, cannot be identified with oral speech, it has been plausibly suggested that the language of these romances is close to the oral form of the New Persian of that period.[4]

The author of the *Iskandarnāma* uses a simple language in terms of vocabulary, grammar and syntax. This simple style of the language of the *Iskandarnāma* is due to the purpose of the author in producing this account. His primary aims are to entertain and to inform about an aspect of the Iranian legendary and historical past, along with various echoes of contemporary historical events and developments.

The simple style of the account is associated with the form of the romance. This form may be characterised as flexible. The narrative lacks the same systematic degree of arrangement that polite accounts enjoy. That means that the author chooses the topic and the main layout of his story (the first and second book) and then he embellishes it with various stories (the plots and subplots). He is free to rearrange the order of stories or events and to interpolate various others. He changes the details of an incident, adds more characters and assigns each person of the narrative a different role each time. Given the prose nature of the *Iskandarnāma* and the flexible character of its form, it is evident that the language aiming to entertain could not be highly elaborate.

The sources of the author are both written and oral. The written sources are the *Shāhnāma*, *Siyar al-mulūk*, *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*, Wahb b. Munabbih and ʿUnṣūrī. In spite of the written sources, the author of the *Iskandarnāma* probably relies on oral traditions and legends, as this is reflected in the division of the repertoire of stories into main and secondary or framed stories.[5]

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[4] Hanaway, 283-285.
[5] Ibid., 231; Rubanovic, 'Reconstruction', 219-232.

Nothing can be said with certainty about the author and the subsequent scribes of the text. However, he is skilful enough to produce a popular account about Alexander's life adjusted to the needs of an audience which must have included all social classes: the royal court, local aristocracy (*dihqān*), merchants, artisans, peasants and so on. The dual nature of the sources of the *Iskandarnāma* in combination with the purpose of the author to address a wide audience justifies the use of a simple language in the narrative. An analysis of the main parameters of the language of the *Iskandarnāma* will contribute to a wider understanding of its historical and linguistic contexts.

Vocabulary

The vocabulary of the *Iskandarnāma* is that of the New Persian language of the late tenth and eleventh century AD. It is mainly Persian with a percentage of Arabic words, playing an important role. The author uses familiar vocabulary in order to transmit his messages more easily to a wide range of audience: from the most educated members of the court and the upper classes to the illiterate masses. The overwhelming use of Persian vocabulary is due to the fact that the *Iskandarnāma* has been produced in the eastern Iranian regions under Persianate dynasties, and it addresses a Persian-speaking audience during a period of the so-called renaissance of Persian language and literature.

Given that the nature of Persian words in the narrative is quite simple and everyday, it is of particular interest to have a look at the Arabic words, their quality, nature and frequency in the narrative. As in the case of the Persian vocabulary, Arabic words attested in the *Iskandarnāma* reflect the bulk of Arabic words in the daily oral and written speech of Persian at that period. So these Arabic words do not pose a problem of comprehension to the Persian audience or readers of the *Iskandarnāma*. These words are used mainly as nouns, adjectives, vital components in compound verbs, prepositions, stereotyped phrases and religious quotations. The examples below are not exhaustive and aim to give a sample of the type of Arabic words in the New Persian language of the *Iskandarnāma*.

With regard to Arabic *nouns*, there are examples encompassing all aspects of knowledge and life. For example there are terms regarding geography: *mashriq*

(=East)[6] and *maghrib* (=West):[7] time: *waqt, muddat* (=time),[8] *sā'at* (=hour)[9] and *tammām* (=end),[10] religion and relevant knowledge: *imān* (=faith)[11] and *ḥakīm* (=sage);[12] politics and administration: *malik* (=ruler, governor, king),[13] *amīr* (=commander, ruler)[14] and *rasūl* (=messenger);[15] astronomical and mathematical or numerical terms: *ṭālḥ* (=star),[16] *daraja* (=level, degree)[17] and *'addad* (=number);[18] abstract terms: *qudra* (=power),[19] *ṣabr* (=patience),[20] *ḥukm* (=will)[21] and *'umr* (=life);[22] and various other terms: *ḥikāyat* (=story),[23] *ṣūrat* (=face),[24] *qal'a* (= fort),[25] *ḥiṣār* (=fort)[26] and *bin* (<ibn = son).[27]

Regarding *adjectives* there is a similar variety of examples: *'ajā'ib* (=miracle),[28] *ākhir* (=last),[29] *'alīm* (=knowledgeable),[30] *ḥaqq* (=right)[31] and *rasm* (=official).[32]

There are also some *prepositions and adverbial expressions* of Arabic origin, such as *ba'aḍī az* (=some of)[33] and *ma'a* (=with).[34]

Arabic or Perso-Arabic stereotyped phrases have mostly a religious character and are very commonly cited in the narrative: *wa allāhu 'alim* (=God is omniscient),[35]

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[6] Ibid., 253:20.
[7] Ibid., 220:14.
[8] Ibid., 195:6 270:8
[9] Ibid., 415:7.
[10] Ibid., 408:6.
[11] *IN,* 112:12.
[12] Ibid., 509:12-13.
[13] Ibid., 28:15.
[14] Ibid., 362:10-11.
[15] Ibid., 256.
[16] Ibid., 286:20.
[17] Ibid., 286:20.
[18] Ibid., 96:6.
[19] Ibid., 377:20.
[20] Ibid., 470:11-12.
[21] Ibid., 10:16.
[22] Ibid., 287:1.
[23] Ibid., 153.
[24] Ibid., 211:1.
[25] Ibid., 246:1.
[26] Ibid., 740:4-5.
[27] Ibid., 3:1.
[28] Ibid., 470:10.
[29] Ibid., 285:15.
[30] Ibid., 702:3.
[31] Ibid., 616:9.
[32] Ibid., 331:20.
[33] Ibid., 112:12-13.
[34] Ibid., 377:20.
[35] Ibid., 195:14.

ma'ādhallāh (=God forbids),[36] (*khudā-yi) 'azza wa jalla, (khudā-yi) ta'āla* [=Glorious, exalted (God)],[37] (*khudāvand-i*) *'azza wa jalla, (khudāvand-i) ta'āla* [=Glorious, exalted (God)],[38] *mubārak bād!* (=Be blessed, congratulations!).[39]

Another category of Arabic influence is the various compound verbs. In this case, the Arabic component comes first and expresses the content of the action and it is followed by the Persian infinitive which expresses the action: *shukr-i kasī guzāshtan* (=to thank someone),[40] *mastulī gashtan* (=to grow bold)[41] and *ḥisāb kardan* (=to calculate).[42]

Lastly there is also another aspect of Arabic influence, that of Quranic quotation. This is used in order to verify the image of Alexander as the *double-horned one*: (It is said in the Glorious Qur'ān:) *Till, when he reached the setting place of the sun, he found it setting in a muddy spring, and found a people thereabout. We said: Double-Horned One! Either punish them or show them kindness.*[43]

Phonetics

Phonetics forms a separate part of the analysis of the style of the narrative.

With regard to *consonants*, special reference must be made to ***dh*** and ***d***: in the Tehran manuscript the terms *gudhār, gudhāra, gudhāshtan* and *gudhashtan* are sometimes attested with a *d* instead of *dh,* a usual phenomenon in early Persian literature. Afshār in his edition adopted the use of *dh* in the above terms.[44]

Aside from this consonant, there are also others in the manuscript, revealing the archaic character of the narrative. For example, the use of *j* instead of *ch* [*jūn* instead of *chūn* (86,1), jandīd / chandīd (86,2)], the use of *b* instead of *p* [beyghambar/peyghambar (86,4), bādishāh/pādishāh (86,5)] and the use of *k* instead of *g* [kuft/guft (56,6)]. These examples abound in the manuscript and the archaic forms have been modernised in Afshār's edition.

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[36] Ibid., 11:4-5.
[37] Ibid., 454:13; 616:10.
[38] Ibid., 568:9.
[39] Ibid., 8:21.
[40] *IN*, 417:14-15.
[41] Ibid., 360:8-9.
[42] Ibid., 470:21.
[43] *(در قران مجید می گوید) حتی اذا بلغ مغرب الشمش و جدها تغرب فی عین حمئه و جد عندها قوما قلنا "یا ذاالقرنین اما ان تعذب و اما ان تتخذ فیهم حسنا"*, ibid., 211:4-6; *Qur'ān*, 18:86; trans. Pickthall, 271-272.
[44] *IN*, 212:5; *ibid.*, introd., 35.

Initial syllable

In early New Persian, various words begin with two initial consonants and for the harmonious connection of these two consonants there is an intervening vowel.[45]

In regard to ***dīgar or digar*** (=other, second), it must be noted that these are two New Persian forms of a word of Old Persian origin.[46]

In another case, some Pahlavi words are influenced phonetically by Arabic, for example: ***suvār*** (=horse-rider) comes from the Pahlavi term *aspvār* and it was later transformed into *asvār*.[47] Also ***juvān*** (=young) comes from the Pahlavi term *yavān*.[48]

Morphology and syntax

The case of ***hamī-*** reflects both archaism and the literary character of the sources that the author used for the compilation of the narrative. This archaic prefix of verb is employed to denote duration. It always precedes the verb and it can be used in every part of the sentence even if various other words intervene. *Hamī-* was in full use in the tenth century AD and it was transformed into *mi-* in the eleventh century AD. In the twelfth century *hamī-* was hardly attested. This transformation reflects both the use of language at the time of the author and the intervention of scribes in the subsequent process of copying and modernising the language of the manuscripts.[49]

Another case is that of ***dar*** instead of ***andar*** (=in). The form *andar* (=in, inside) is more archaic and is in use during the eighth and ninth centuries AD. Probably in the early eleventh century it is replaced by *dar* in Persian poetry and then it is transmitted to prose.[50]

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[45] Lazard, 175.
[46] *IN*, 166:6; Lazard, 180-181.
[47] *IN*, 480:10; Bahār, 147; *IN*, introd., 36.
[48] *IN*, 148:22; 226:16; Bahār, 147; *IN*, introd., 36.
[49] *IN*, 4:4; *ShN* 7, Iskandar, v. 1421; Bahār, 145; Lazard, 177-179.
[50] *IN*, 417:12; Bahār, 132; Lazard, 179-180.

Concerning the plural of Arabic words, this is formed by the addition of the suffix ***–ān*** to the end of the word, for example: *khalqān* (=peoples),[51] *jabbārān* (=oppressors)[52] and *nassākhān (=scribes).*[53]

In some cases Arabic words in their original plural have an extra plural form, -***hā*** or ***–ān***, for example: *kutubhā* (= books),[54] *'ajā'ibhā*,[55] *aḫwālhā*.[56]

The plural ***qumāshāt*** (= clothes) is used instead of *qumāsh,* which is cited only once in the *Iskandarnāma* and it is also attested in the *Qabūsnāma.*[57]

Regarding *iḍāfa,* it is noted that besides the regular form of *iḍāfa (-i),* linking two terms (for example noun-epithet), there is also another rare kind. In some cases ***az*** can be used as *iḍāfa*, for example: *"va shāh bī dastūrī* ***va ṣavāb*** *dīd* ***az vaī*** *hīch kār nakardī"* instead of the equivalent syntactical form *"va shāh bī dastūrī* ***va ṣavāb vaī*** *dīd hīch kār nakardī"* (=and the king saw that he could do nothing without his (Aristotle) guidance and advice).[58]

Regarding *personal pronouns*, the third person singular of the personal pronoun is used both as *ī* and *vaī.*[59]

As far as *demonstrative terms* are concerned, ***īn*** and ***ān*** are attested in their plural form as *īnhā* and *ānhā* and *īnān* and *ānān.*[60] When these terms are preceded by *bih* then a *d* intervenes: *bidīn, bidān.*[61]

Along with ***chūn*** (=when, likewise, similar) which is frequently used, there are also attested some other related terms: ***chunīn*** (= thus, in this way, manner) replaces the more archaic *īdūn*[62] and ***chūnān*** (= so, like that, just as if), consisting of *chūn* and the plural suffix -*ān.*[63]

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[51] *IN*, 470:10.
[52] Ibid., 501:10.
[53] Ibid., 497: 17; *IN*, introd., 30.
[54] Ibid., 90:18; 91:8; 420:8.
[55] Ibid., 107:15; 109:1; 131:4.
[56] Ibid., 115:22; *IN*, introd., 31.
[57] For *qumāsh,* see Ibid., 189:21; for *qumāshāt* see *IN* 79:1; 565:14; 588:17; Bahār. 136.
[58] *IN*, 12-13; Bahār, 142.
[59] *IN*, 429:9; Lazard, 229.
[60] *IN*, 337:16-17; Lazard, 231.
[61] *IN*, 478:14.
[62] Ibid., 298:1; Bahār, 134. Lazard, 239.
[63] *IN*, 192:7, 324:17; Bahār, 148; *IN*, introd., 36.

kih and *chih* are used indiscriminately in the manuscript.[64]

Pronominal suffixes

The use of pronominal suffixes in some cases reveals the use of archaisms.

bidīsh (=with him, us) is an archaism which is still in colloquial use in modern Iran: *bidhim, bidhit, bidhish, bidhimān, bidhitān, bidhishān* (= the colloquial form in modern Khurāsān). In this case, *-yā-* is used between a word and a pronominal suffix, for example: *bidīsh* (= to him/her), *darīsh* (*dar āvarīdīshān* [= let them brought].[65] These forms go back to the Pahlavi language *patim, patit, patish, patimān, patitān, patishān.*[66]

darīsh (or ***darish*** or ***andarish***) (=in/inside him/her) is less archaic than the term *andarish* which is the most archaic one and it is attested in Pahlavi too.[67]

Concerning cardinal numbers, it must be noted that the form ***yakī + noun or pronoun without yi*** or ***yakī + noun with yi*** is used instead of *yak*. For example, *har chih farmūdī bijāyi āvaram ilā īn yakī* (=I will do whatever you ordered apart from this one.)[68]

A number of *adverbs and adverbial expressions* are also attested, for example: ***īnjā*** (=here) is used instead of the archaic *īdhar*. Sometimes there is no ا(=*a)* at the beginning of the word, for example: ازینجا(=from here).[69] In the eleventh century AD ***dar pīsh*** (=near to, next to) replaces *nazd* or *nazdīk* and it is later transformed into *pīsh*.[70] ***sar dastī*** (= incomplete) is a synonym expression of *nasākhta* and *qiyr āmada*.[71] ***bar bālā*** (above all) is an equivalent of *fūq* and *dar fūq*.[72]

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[64] Ibid., introd., 36; Lazard 237.
[65] *IN*, 142:19, 478:2, 754:3 and 429:6: respectively; *ibid.*, introd., 31.
[66] Bahār, 146.
[67] *IN*, 292:11; Bahār, 134.
[68] *IN*, 11:4; Bahār, 135; Lazard, 215-216.
[69] *IN*, 11:4; 9:6; Bahār, 134; Lazard, 235.
[70] *IN*, 509:12; Bahār, 134.
[71] *IN*, 622:4; Bahār, 145.
[72] *IN*, 569:12; Bahār, 141.

The use of the ***verbal prefix bi-*** in a verb is a form of archaism.[73] The origin of the *bi-* has not been established. In the *Iskandarnāma* it is used in the simple past tense and the imperative. For example:

Simple past tense: *dar 'ajab bimānd* (= he was surprised).[74]

Imperative: *bidān (= beware)*.[75]

The ***verbal suffix –ī*** is an archaic feature in Persian poetry and prose literature. In the present and past tenses it expresses the unreal nature of the action. It is often used to contribute to the elegance and embellishment of style.[76] In particular, in the past tense it expresses habitual action. Some examples in the narrative are: *dānistandī* (= they used to know, consider)[77] and *firistādandī*: *va bifarmūd tā har sāl az khazīnihā-yi ū chīzīhā-yi nafīs bihidyat biqayṣar firistādandī* (= and he ordered precious things from his treasury to be sent as gifts to Qaysar every year).[78]

Personal pronouns ***-am, ī, -ast, -īm, -īd, -and*** are used as verbal suffixes instead of the verb *būdan*: *farzandān-i ādam ānd* (=they are children of Adam).[79]

Another interesting case is that of ***būd (or buvad)*** and ***bibūd = būd (or buvad)***: some times *bibūd* replaces *būd* having the meaning of *guzashtan(=to pass), raftan (=to go) and ṭaī kardan (=to pass, to cross): ey barādar bidān kih kār-i man bibūd* (=O brother, beware that this was my lot).[80]

Regarding irregular forms of ***past tense*** it is noted that in some cases the past tense of a verb in the first and second persons plural are formed as follows:

verb theme in the past tense + pronominal suffix + yā

For example: *khurdimānī* and *yāftimānī* instead of *khurdīm* and *yāftīm* respectively,[81] *kishīdimānī* instead of *kishīdīm*.[82]

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[73] Bahār, 137; Lazard, 298.
[74] *IN*, 4:1.
[75] Ibid., 416:17.
[76] Bahār, I:350.
[77] *IN*, 5:7.
[78] Ibid., 4:3.
[79] Ibid., 95:10; Bahār, 137.
[80] *IN*, 10:16; Bahār, 132-133.
[81] *IN*, 95:9.
[82] Ibid., 331:11; *ibid.*, introd., 32-33.

Negation: particles and irregular negation

The particles for negation are ***ma-*** and ***na-*** (=not). *Ma-* is a more archaic form and it is used mostly in the imperative whilst *na-* is used in all other cases of negation, such as in front of the verb, infinitive, present participle and past participle. For example: *shāhā, mapurs* (=O king, do not ask).[83]

In some cases negation is not placed before the main verb but after it, at the beginning of the auxiliary verb *būdan*, for example: *zan rā burda nīst* (=he has not brought the woman) instead of *zan rā naburda ast*.[84]

mah…mah… *(=Neither…nor…)*: This syntactical phenomenon reflects negation regarding two factors in a sentence: *mah tū va mah malik miṣr kih pidar-i zan-i tū būd* (=neither you nor the king of Egypt who was the father of your wife).[85]

Compound verbs

A number of archaic compound verbs are attested in the narrative. Below is a list with some of them:

dūst dāshtan (=to fall in love): a synonym of *dūst giriftan*.[86]

chīzī dar kār-i kasī (yā chīzī) kardan (= to forgive someone for an action he/she did): This term comes from the Safavid period: *…va khudāvand…gunahān-i mārā dar kār-i ū kunad* (= …and God … will forgive our sins).[87]

'ajā'ib māndan (= to be surprised): A synonym of *'ajab dāshtan* and *ta'ajjub kardan*: *'ajā'ib bimānd*.[88]

dar bāqī āmadan (=to end, to reach the end): *…dar bāqī āmada ast* (=it has ended).[89]

dar bāqī kardan (=to abandon, to desert):… *īn 'ishqī dar bāqī konam (= to abandon this love)*.[90]

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[83] Ibid.,702:14.
[84] Ibid., 430:2; Bahār, 140; *IN*, introd., 31.
[85] Ibid., 196:17-18; Bahār, 138-139.
[86] *IN*, 4:1.
[87] Ibid., 185:7; Bahār, 133.
[88] *IN*, 79:21; Bahār, 134.
[89] *IN*, 78:21; also 102:20; Bahār, 135.
[90] *IN*, 397:3; Bahār, 135.

Rahā kardan: *Its meaning is that of 'adad-i man' (absence of disagreement): va murghābhā albata rahā nimīkardand* (= and the chicken certainly did not agree).[91]

bā sarī shudan (=to end and pass): It is used in the same meaning as *khatam shudan*, *bikulī kharāb shudan*: *...kih kār-i īshān bā sarī shud* (=... that their lives were over).[92]

rāst āmadan: It has various meanings, such as to follow the right way, do the right thing, to accomplish: *nabāyad kih rāst āmadan* (=Does she not have to follow the right way)?[93]

Bālāī dādan (= to disgrace, to defame): Used instead of *tarāghī dādan*: *ammā turā bālāī diham* (= ...but to disgrace you...).[94]

āb dar chishm āvardan (= to cry): A synonym of *girīa kardan*: *...va dar āb dar chishm āvard.*[95]

zūr giriftan (= to insist): A synonym of *ibrām giriftan* and *iṣṣrār kardan*: *khurūs murghānrā zūr girift va...(=the rooster insisted against the chicken and ...).*[96]

ma'adhūr-i farmūdan dāshtan: meaning that *farmūdan kih ma'adhūrish dārand* (= an order according to which they have his forgiveness).[97]

Syntactical style

The type and arrangement of sentences are simple and light. The author pursues a rapid development of the plot. This can be achieved with easy vocabulary and short independent sentences. Thus the message is transmitted in a fast and comprehensible manner. Sentences are connected with *va*, for example: *shāh dārāb lashkar rāst kard va az shahr birūn āmad* (= King Dārāb prepared (his) army and came out of the city).[98]

In a sentence the subject is always at the beginning, the object in the middle and the verb comes always at the end. Often the subject comes before the temporal particle: v*a iskandar chūn bidīd kih...* (= and Alexander when he saw that ...).[99]

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[91] *IN*, 284:9; Bahār, 138.
[92] *IN*, 454:15; Bahār, 141.
[93] *IN*, 191:21; Bahār, 142.
[94] *IN*, 300:12; Bahār, 143-144.
[95] *IN*, 185:6.
[96] Ibid., 284:21; Bahār, 144.
[97] *IN*, 497:16-17; *ibid.*, introd., 33.
[98] Ibid., 7:3.
[99] Ibid., 19:16.

Another common type of syntax is that of two sentences expressing time: *chūn fūr īn sukhān bishinīd guft*... (=when Fūr heard this word. he said).[100]

Sentences begin either with *va* (=and), *pas* (=then), *chūn* (=when) or *va chūn* (=and when), *chunīn* (=thus), *ba'ad az* (= after something).[101]

As for the *use of the infinitive*, *i*n some sentences, when *baiād* precedes, the infinitive is used as a verb. For example: *bāyad dānistan* (= we need to know).[102]
Other noteworthy usages:

kharābāt (=tavern, gaming house): A term attested in Sanā'ī's poetry and also in literature during the Safavid period.[103]

jang (=war): It replaces the Arabic equivalent *ḥarb* and this also happens in Ṭabarī, Gardīzī and the *Ta'rīkh-i Sīstān*.[104]

durūd or ***durūdgar*** (=praise, greetings): A synonym of *anūsha* (=happiness, joy).[105]

durūdgar (=God-protected): Compound word consisting of the word *durūd* (= happiness, may God be your companion) and the suffix *-gar*.[106]

ham chandīn (=*some of* quantity, size or quality, or *of this quantity* or *of this size* or *of this quality*) = It is used instead of *chandīn*.[107]

bighāyat = This term is placed separately in front of a word, such as *sakht* (=difficult, hard) - *Bighāyat sakht (=very difficult, too difficult)*, *nīk* (=good, well), *'aẓīm* (great, supreme) in order to emphasize.[108]

Kūsh-kūshish = It has the meaning of *irāda* (=will, intention) and *qaṣd* (=purpose, attempt, effort).[109]

Prepositions

The use of various propositions in the *Iskandarnāma*:

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[100] Ibid., 21:9.
[101] Ibid., 19:11; 19:16; 16:1; 17:13; 14:11.
[102] Ibid., 356:4.
[103] Ibid., 185:21; Bahār, 133.
[104] *IN*, 7:1; Bahār, 134.
[105] *IN*, 272:1; Bahār, 137.
[106] *IN*, 472:1.
[107] Ibid., 337:2.
[108] Ibid., 152:4; Bahār, 136.
[109] *IN*, 8:4.

- ***Bā*** = It is used in three ways:

- As *bih* (= to): *bā rūyi-man nayāvardī* (=You did not come to me)[110]

- As *bar* (= over, against): … *va bā sar-i malik va padishāhī khūd ravad* (= and go on his own against the king and monarchy).[111]

- As *dar* (= in): *va… bā chāh uftād* (= and he fell in the well).[112]

- ***Bar*** = It is used as *dar* (=in): *kih bar avval sharḥ dādīm* (= and at the beginning we explained).[113]

- ***Bih*** = It is used in two ways:

- as *bā* (=with): *…va zamīn bih man shikāft* (= *and he split the land with me*).[114]

-as *barāyi* (= for): *…bih chih padīdār āmadī?* (= for what reason did you come?).[115]

- ***Dar*** = It is used as *bih*: *agar yik kulnag dīgar mī zadand shāh dar zīr mī āftad* (= if they took another choice, then the king would be defeated.).[116]

- ***Furā*** = It is used as bih: *tan furā qaẓā dādam* (= I yielded myself to destiny).[117]

In sum, the above linguistic phenomena reveal a style of Persian language in dealing that the narrative was produced in early eleventh century. Some linguistic neologisms were added later, during the various re-compilations of the *Iskandarnāma*. In particular the above remarks reflect the multiple aspects of the New Persian language which was in florescence in late tenth and early eleventh century. In his analysis of the *Iskandarnāma* Bahār claims that the narrative was translated into Persian from Arabic. [118] Indeed there are some manifestations of Arabic influence in the narrative: one of them are the Arabic forms of heroes of the Greek Alexander romance, such as Aristatalis, Faylaqūs, Qaydhāfa, Arāqīt (?) and others; there is also the Muslim image of Alexander as the Quranic prophetical figure of *dhu 'l-qarnayn*; and lastly the quotations of Arabic authors, such as Wahb b. Munabbih`s and al-Faraj

[110] Ibid., 154:10; *ibid.*, introd., 33.
[111] Ibid., 112; Afshār, 33.
[112] *IN*, 339:12; Afshār, 33.
[113] *IN*, 298:6; Afshār, 33.
[114] *IN*, 271:15; Afshār, 33.
[115] *IN*, 218:21; Afshār, 33.
[116] *IN*, 370:21-22; Afshār, 33.
[117] *IN*, 416:5; Afshār, 33.
[118] Bahār, 128.

Ba'ad al-Shadda's accounts, as sources of Islamic lore and legendary stories (the stories of the King of Miṣr) for the compilation of the *Iskandarnāma*.

Regarding the Arabic forms of Greek names in the Persian narrative, these suggest that either the author consulted an Arabic source or that these names are an influence of the Arabic language in the New Persian vocabulary after the emergence of Islam. The insertion of these names into Persian vocabulary could have taken place centuries before the compilation of the narrative. As a result of the use of Arabic as the main linguistic medium in science and literature in the first three centuries of the Islamic era, it is very likely that Iranians narrated and read stories about Alexander with Arabicised names of heroes.

As for the Muslim image of Alexander as *dhu 'l-qarnayn* this suggests an Arabic influence at a very early point of the literary transmission of the Alexander romance in the East. Yet this element formed already a part of the Iranian oral and literary traditions when the *Iskandarnāma* was compiled in the early eleventh century. By contrast Alexander is a Perso-Muslim prophet king whose fused image must be seen within the historical context of the narrative's compilation.

Munabbih's account was only a source from the various accounts and authors (Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma*, 'Unṣurī, *Siyar al-Mulūk*) that the author of the narrative consulted before or during its compilation. Given that in the late tenth and early eleventh centuries bilingual scholars and scribes were a common phenomenon in Iran, it is very plausible that the Iranian author of the *Iskandarnāma* consulted Arabic literary sources, or Persian translations of these works, and included Arabic stories along with the material from Persian sources in the Persian narrative. Also Arabic vocabulary and scarce phraseology were a literary device for early Persian accounts. The fact that partial material of the Persian narrative was drawn from Arabic sources does not necessarily mean that the author translated his Arabic source as such and he added his material into the narrative. It is likely though that some stories could have been directly translated from the Arabic but this cannot be claimed about the entire narrative. The analysis of the language of the narrative does not reveal any evidence which could suggest that the *Iskandarnāma* was directly translated from an Arabic version of Alexander's life. By contrast, the simple style of New Persian suggests that the account was written for entertainment and is probably close to the Persian daily spoken language of that period.

ii. Common themes between the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*

The *Shāhnāma* is a link between the pre-Islamic and Islamic literary traditions, of which a part is the *Iskandarnāma.* Although the text obviously shows strong influences from the Arabic version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, one could state that this influence on the *Iskandarnāma* is not the only one. In particular, several narrative themes in both texts denote a strong relationship between the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma.*[1] Some of these common stories represent the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition of the Greek text as shown below. It is important to compare the two texts in order to prove the preservation of a part of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition in the *Iskandarnāma*. By proving this relation, it is easier then to base the comparison of the two texts (the *Iskandarnāma* and the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* version) with respect to the figure of Alexander on this relationship. The common points between the *Shāhnāma* and *Iskandarnāma* in the first part of the comparison aim to point out the close relationship between these two texts within the Persian literary tradition. In the second part of the comparison, the aim is to point out the transmission of the common elements met in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition and the *Iskandarnāma* through the *Shāhnāma*.

The literary connection between the two texts (*Pseudo-Callisthenes* Greek version and the *Iskandarnāma*) through the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance concerning Alexander can be proved only through the study of some of their narrative details about the life of Alexander. These details reflect common and non-common elements between the two texts. The common elements, which are mentioned in the appendix II, point out the influence of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition primarily in the *Shāhnāma* and subsequently in the *Iskandarnāma*.

The *Shāhnāma,* the *Iskandarnāma* and the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition

Regarding the common stories included in both Persian texts concerning Alexander's life and exploits, there are several points of agreement between the

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[1] The influence of the *Shāhnāma* on the *Iskandarnāma* in terms of narrative themes is more than obvious, especially if one compares several common stories, such as that of the Sasanian king Ardashīr I and the daughter of the last Parthian king Ardavān V in the *Shāhnāma*. See Hanaway, *op.cit.*, 197.

Shāhnāma and the *Iskandarnāma* which are also met in the Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance and found in the Persian texts. These will be briefly analyzed below:

Sikandar against Fūr (Porus).[2] The story of Sikandar (Alexander)`s campaign against Fūr, the notorious king of India, is a common story in the two texts under analysis here. The common points of the story are the following; Sikandar asks Fūr to surrender but the latter refuses to do so;[3] the troops of Sikandar and Fūr fight each other and Sikandar successfully uses fire and naphtha in order to defeat the best weapons of the Indians, the elephants,[4] and lastly, Fūr is killed by Sikandar.[5]

The story of Sikandar and Fūr is one of those that strongly denote the close relationship between the two texts and the influence of the *Shāhnāma* upon the later literary tradition and the *Iskandarnāma*.

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[2] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, XV-XVIII; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 142-174.

[3] In the *Shāhnāma* Sikandar sends through an envoy his aggressive message to Fūr, (*ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 459-476) whilst in the *IN* Sikandar goes on his own disguised as a messenger to Fūr's court and he meets in person the Indian king who is unaware of the real identity of the envoy. When he realizes the truth and tries to arrest Sikandar, it is too late for Fūr (*IN*, 20); Southgate, 18-19; In the Greek version of the *Ps.Call* romance Poros is the one who sends first a letter to Alexander urging him to abandon his land. See *Ps.Call.*, III.2.

[4] In the *Shāhnāma*, Sikandar uses iron steeds and metal riders filled with naphtha, *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 555; In the *Iskandarnāma* he uses camels and Arab warriors who carry bottles of fire and naphtha against the elephants (*IN*, 19, Southgate, 19).

The motif of the use of fire and naphtha by Alexander against the numerous elephants of Poros does not reflect the historical accounts of Alexander's life. According to them, the elephants of Poros are defeated by the clever tactic of the Greeks who through their manoevres put the elephants and the rest of the Indian army into a state of agitation. See Arrian, V.17. These accounts are transmitted to the Alexander romances and popular works of Late Antiquity through the Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* romance. See *Ps.Call.*, III.3.10-12: *"οσους αν είχεν ανδριάντας χαλκούς και των στρατιωτων τα καταφράγματα στησας τρόπαια τουτους εκέλευσε πυρωθηναι επιμελως ως ειναι μόνον πυρ το χάλκωμα..."(=having many copper statues he set the figures standing vertically and ordered them to be put into the fire carefully so as to burn only the copper...)*

[5] In the *Shāhnāma* he is killed (beheaded) by Sikandar in a single combat with him:

سیکندر چو باد اندر آمد ز گرد / بزد تیغ تیزي بران شیر مرد
ببرید پی بر بر و گردانش / ز بالا بخاک اندر آمد

(*Then Sikandar like a blast came out from the dust and smote the hero with his sharp sword, and he cut the sinew of the barbarian and the (latter's) head and neck sank to earth") ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 597; in the *Iskandarnāma* Fūr falls into the hands of Sikandar and he is imprisoned. In spite of Sikandar's efforts to convert Fūr to the Islamic faith, Fur refuses. Then he is beheaded (*IN* 22; Southgate, 21-22); In the *Pseudo-Callisthenes'* account Alexander killed Poros by inserting his sword into the flank of Poros. See *Ps.Call* III.4.7-9.

Alexander's visit to Queen Candace in Andalus.[6] Sikandar disguised as a messenger goes to Candace's (Qaydhāfa in the *Shāhnāma*) palace to spy. Candace, however, is aware of the real identity of the person that has come to visit her, since she has seen in the past a painted portrait of Sikandar.[7] Sikandar is embarrassed and unable to react when he feels trapped in Candace's plans. However, his fears are temporary, since Candace respects his fame and deeds, and permits him to leave. The story is common to both texts without major differences. Its origin goes back to the Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* with the only difference being that the kingdom of Candace is located near Egypt (Ethiopia).[8]

The Amazons/Fairies.[9] In the case of the *"Amazons"*, things are more perplexing. The term "Amazon" does not appear in either of the Persian texts. In the *Shāhnāma* one reads the term *'harūm'* and in the *Iskandarnāma* the term *"vilāyat-i paryān"* in order to define the land of women that Sikandar visits.[10] Sikandar decides to visit the lands inhabited only by women who are spouseless. He sends an envoy and asks kindly for their permission to enter their territory. The women reply positively and a dialogue follows between Sikandar and the chief of the women. After that Sikandar departs for the land where the Source of Life is.

In the *Iskandarnāma*, there is a similar account with many variations regarding the details of the narration.[11] The name, as in the *Shāhnāma*, is not mentioned neither in the *Iskandarnāma*. Actually, in the prose text Sikandar has to deal not with human natural women (*Shāhnāma*) but with fairies, female supernatural beings with hairy legs that can fly and have superhuman power. Their leader is Queen Arāqīt (in the *Shāhnāma* the leader of the women warriors remains anonymous).[12] The common features so far

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[6] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 763-851; *IN*, 192; Southgate, 48-51; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 53, 168.
[7] *IN*, 195; Southgate, 50.
[8] *Ps.Call.*, III.22.
[9] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1235-1325; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 149.
[10] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1235; *IN*, 354.
[11] *IN*, 354-384; Southgate, 76.
[12] Arāqīt's figure is quite complicated in the *IN*. In particular she appears to have many common features with the Queen of Sheba in the adventures of the Prophet Solomon. L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, vol. 4 (Philadelphia, 1925-1947), 145. See also Southgate, 210-211. This aspect is enforced by the fact that the name of Solomon is mentioned many times during this adventure of Sikandar. For example, in the case where Sikandar orders his soldiers to draw the circular line around their camp in order to be protected from

between the two texts are Sikandar's visit to a remote and forbidden land inhabited only by female warriors (natural or supernatural); the leader of these female warriors is distinguished from the rest and is the person with whom Sikandar speaks many times: the female warriors until Sikandar's visit are invincible; the female warriors' (women or fairies) refusal to surrender their land to Sikandar.[13]

The common elements above are few but enough to support the idea that in the *Iskandarnāma* the Amazons' story of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition is preserved.[14] However, the narration in the *Iskandarnāma* is quite different from that of the *Shāhnāma* and the Syriac version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance. Due to the common elements of the three narrations it is probable that in this case the basic line of the motif of Alexander's visit to the Land of Amazons is the same as in the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* Syriac version, the *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*.

Gog and Magog.[15] The story of Gog and Magog is ancient and the Greek text of *Pseudo-Callisthenes* contributed as a literary source to the spread of this story in the Middle East and the West in late antiquity.[16] Many interpretations regarding the names of the Gog and Magog as well as the "wall" have been given so far but the most plausible is that they reflect the view held by the populations on Iranian soil as well as the rest of Western Asia about the invading tribes of Central and North Asia.[17] As for the wall it cannot be located in one specific geographical area but was transferred gradually eastwards from the

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the sudden attacks of the fairies when the soldiers are sleeping. This action was attributed to Solomon by the fairies that appear to consider Sikandar as Solomon himself, *IN,* 354; Southgate, 76-77.

[13] *IN,* 357.

[14] In the *Ps.Call.,* III.27 Alexander sends a letter to his mother narrating the friendly episode with the Amazons. He describes them vividly as strong, enormous and brave. This description is close to the image of fairies in the *Iskandarnāma.*

[15] Gog and Magog are biblical figures (Gen. 10:2, Ezekiel 38, 39) and make up a part of the Islamic eschatological tradition. In particular, the Prophet Muḥammad tried to convert them to Islam and after their denial they were sent to Hell. Their constant effort is to break the barriers built by *dhu 'l-qarnayn* and they will eventually succeed in breaking the barriers and conquering the world. It is then that the Messiah will come. See A.R. Anderson, *Alexander's Gate, Gog and Magog and Enclosed Nations* (Cambridge Mass., 1932), 4-5; Ṣafavī, *op.cit.*, 52, 315.

[16] According to the Greek text, Alexander, divinely enlightened, built an iron wall with copper gates in order to protect his empire from the invasions of the *"Μαζοί"* (Magog). The location of the wall is in Armenia (South Caucasus). *Ps.Call.*, III.29; also see Ross, *Alexander Historiatus*, 34-35.

[17] The term *Gog and Magog* was synonymous with the "barbarian" tribes who burst through the north-eastern frontiers of the civilized world. The nations that have been identified with Gog and Magog are the Scythians, Alans, Khazars, Arabs, Turks, Magyars, Parthians, Mongols and the Ten Tribes of Israel. See Anderson, *op.cit.*, 12-14; Ross, *op.cit.*, 36.

Caspian Gates and the Pass of Dariel (south Caucasus) in the pre-Islamic period to Darband (Gurgān - north eastern Iran) and Central Asia (Transoxiana) during Islamic times (from the twelfth century AD).[18]

The theme of Gog and Magog is later incorporated in the Syriac Christian legend concerning Alexander, a text which probably becomes the source for the text of the *Qur'ān.*[19] The quotation of Gog and Magog in the Quranic text as well as the use of the term *dhu'l-qarnayn* have a strong impact regarding the spread of this narrative theme in the Islamic literary tradition. This part of Alexander's adventures becomes henceforth an inseparable aspect of the Islamic literary tradition concerning the Life of Alexander.[20] The Persian accounts, in particular Firdawsī's *Shāhnāma* and the *Iskandarnāma*, form a part of the Islamic literary tradition about Alexander *Dhu 'l-qarnayn.*

In the *Shāhnāma* the Quranic story is repeated, but this time the *double-horned one* has the name of Sikandar, although in the Quranic passage the *double-horned one* remains anonymous. Sikandar is the one who reaches the land of Yājūj and Mājūj.[21] He listens to the complaints of the inhabitants of a city regarding the invasions of the Yājūj and Mājūj in their land and Sikandar decides to build a wall of metal, a barrier which will protect the whole world from the "monsters".[22] In the *Iskandarnāma* there is quite a different account; Sikandar aims at conquering a land unknown to him and is informed about the land beyond Shāhmalik's kingdom in Central Asia. The name of Yājūj and Mājūj is repeated three times whilst, according to one geographical reference, they are living on the other side (?) (of the wall perhaps) in the Land of the Rising Sun, meaning the Far East.[23] In this account, Alexander does not appear to have built any wall because it is implied that the wall already exists. The Yājūj and Mājūj are one of the main obstacles along with the Turks to reach the Land of the Rising Sun. Alexander will

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[18] Ibid., 15. However, historically speaking, Alexander never visited the Caucasian region. See idem, 'Alexander and the Caspian Gates', *Amer.Phil Assoc.Tr.Pr.,* LIX (1928), 139-142.

[19] For the Syriac Christian Legend of Alexander, see *Syriac Version*, lxxvii-lxxvix; *Qur'ān*, 18:82 and 21:96. The Syriac legend was inspired by Heraclius' expedition against the Sasanians (622-628). It was written by an author living in Edessa or Amida (Osrohene), see G.J. Reinink, 'Alexandre et le dernier empereur du monde: les développements du concept de la royauté chrétienne dans les sources syriaques du septième siècle', in L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*, 152-153.

[20] A.R. Anderson, 'Alexander's Horns', *Amer.Phil.Ass.Tr.Pr.,* 58 (1927), 101; idem, *Gog and Magog,* 29.

[21] *ShN*, vol. 7, XXXV, pp. 84-87.

[22] *ShN*, 7, Iskandar, v. 1469-1470.

[23] *IN,* 507; Southgate, 116.

eventually enter the land beyond the wall and he will fight the Yājūj and Mājūj (=Elephant-ears).[24] The fictional element dominates the text and both nations are called "Elephant-ears". Despite its different account, the existence of the names of the Gog and Magog in the text of the *Iskandarnāma* enrols the text in the literary Islamic tradition originating from the Quranic quotation.

Besides the common character of the themes analyzed above between the *Shāhnāma* and *Iskandarnāma*, themes that denote the organic relationship between these two Persian works with the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition, special attention must be paid to the role that these common themes play in the internal construction of the plot of the *Iskandarnāma*.

As has been analyzed, the narrative themes about Alexander's life are divided into main and secondary. The three common themes (Fur, Candace, Fairies) belong to the category of main stories. That means that they are an integral part of the skeleton of the text and a vital part in the promotion of the plot. Perhaps they were introduced as main stories and retained this character in the long process during the formation of the text. They are not narrated by the heroes of the plot but by the author of the text. The recipients are not the heroes of the text but either the audience of a lively storytelling process or the readers of the *Iskandarnāma*. Moreover, direct interaction can be traced only in the first case (between the narrator and the audience) but not during the reading process.

The main character of these themes denotes the importance of these themes in the weaving of the text and the formation of a plot with steady points of development, points from which the secondary stories can be developed. Moreover, the main character of these themes reveals the strong influence of the *Shāhnāma*, since the compiler of the *Iskandarnāma* cannot probably be aware of the long literary and oral tradition that goes back to the Greek version of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance.

Given the material analyzed above and due to both, the similarity of the stories and their role in the development of the plot, one could argue that there are some common aspects of narrative themes in the two Persian texts and the Greek version of the

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[24] *IN*, 535; Southgate, 150-153.

Pseudo-Callisthenes romance, strongly suggesting the influence of the pre-Islamic Greek tradition on the Islamic literary context of the eleventh century AD onwards. The influence and preservation of the Greek *Pseudo-Callisthenes* romance in the Persian literature of the Islamic period take place indirectly through the use of several translations of the Greek version and in particular the Syriac version.[25] The connection between the Greek (*Pseudo-Callisthenes*) and the Persian traditions (*Shāhnāma*, *Iskandarnāma and other*) during the tenth and eleventh centuries in the Iranian world would create the new literary image of Alexander, that of the legendary Persianized and Muslim hero.[26] The formation of this tradition would be gradual and, as shown below, the result of this process would be the transformation of Alexander from a Graeco-Christian emperor into a Perso-Muslim king, reflecting both pre-Islamic Iranian glory and devotion to Islamic principles.

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[25] Syriac version, 20.

[26] The legendary figure of Alexander in the Persian accounts combines the virtues of brave warrior, ideal ruler and philosopher/sage, see Southgate, 'Portrait of Alexander the Great', 280, 283-284; W.L. Hanaway, 'Alexander and the Question of Iranian Identity' in *Iranica Varia. Papers in Honor of Professor Ehsan Yarshater* (Leiden, 1990), 94.

iii. The Greek text-*recension β*

There are three main recensions of the literary transmission of the non-extant Greek text in its original form: *α, β,* and *δ. Rec. a* is the oldest version (third-fourth centuries AD) and is preserved in MS Paris, Bibl. Nat. Grec 1711 and in MS Leiden (eleventh century), Univ. Libr. Vulcanius 93 (fifteenth century).[27] MS Paris Bibl. Nat. Grec 1711 became the basis of the edition of Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni*.[28] Some translations of the lost manuscripts of the *rec. α* are valuable for the further establishment of the characteristics of the recension. The Armenian translation of the fifth century (the silver era of Armenian literature, 450-578) and the Latin translation *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis* by Julius Valerius help in the partial restoration of the lost *rec. α*.[29] Finally, a part of the collection of wise sayings by Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (ninth century AD) and the short life of Alexander in the *Mukhtār al-ḥikam wa-maḥāsin al-kalīm* of Abu'l-Wafā' al-Mubashshir b. Fātik (d. 1053 AD) were probably derived from the *recension α.*[30]

Rec. β (first quarter of the sixth century) was derived from the *rec. α* and it also influenced the *recension δ. Rec. β* is important for the reconstruction of the lost original and has three *derivatives recensions γ, ε* and *λ.*[31] *Rec. β* brings the legend very close to the historical core of Alexander's story. Its main derivatives are the Bulgarian life of

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[27] *A Hebrew Alexander Romance,* 13. H. Meusel published MS L; 'Pseudo-Callisthenes, nach der Leidener Handschrift herausgegeben', *Jahrbücher f. Klass. Philologie,* Neue Folge, Supplementband, V (Leipzig, 1871), 700-816; A. Lolos, 'The Arabic translation of the later Pseudo-Calisthenes' romance about Alexander the Great', (in Greek) *Graeco-Arabica,* 3 (1984), 196.

[28] Pseudo-Callisthenes, *Historia Alexandri Magni (Pseudo-Callisthenes)*, ed. W. Kroll, vol. I (Berlin, 1926).

[29] Pseudo-Callisthenes, The *Romance of Alexander the Great by Pseudo-Callisthenes*, trans. A. M. Wolohoian (New York, 1969), 119-120; Julius Valerius, *Res Gestae Alexandri Macedonis*, ed. B. Kuebler (Leipzig, 1888).

[30] Ross, *op.cit.*, 7-9.

[31] Cary considers the *derivative recension γ* as a *main recension* without taking into consideration the relationship of the several *main* and *derivative recensions.* See Cary, *op.cit.*, 10. The *derivative recension ε* is dated to the sixth century. *Ps.Call.*, X.

The *rec. γ* comes from a *β-type* MS compiled by someone familiar with Jewish sources. *Pseudo-Callisthenes, primum*, ed. C. Müller, (Paris, 1846); F.P. Magoun, *Gests of King Alexander of Macedon* (Cambridge Mass., 1929), 37. The main derivatives of the *recension γ* are a Hebrew Alexander Romance, a Georgian prose translation of the fourteenth century which had as a source the *Serbian Alexander* and lastly the Modern Greek chapbook Alexander, printed at Venice in 1669. Cary, *op.cit.*, 10.

Alexander (before the twelfth century) and the Greek poem *o Βίος Αλεξάνδρου* (fourteenth century).[32]

Rec. *γ*, sharing common elements with Josephus and Rabbinical literature. results from a Jewish reworking.[33] It also comes from a mixed textual tradition deriving from *β* and *ε*.[34] It was written some time later than *rec. ε*.[35]

Rec. δ also derives from *rec. a* and survives in no Greek manuscript and forms mainly the oriental branch of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* literary tradition. *Rec. δ* survives indirectly in the ultimate lost source of the Syriac and Ethiopic versions as well as the Latin translation by Archpriest Leo of Naples (950 A.D) of the now lost Greek manuscript.[36] The original Greek text now lost was probably translated into Pahlavi in the fifth century and then from Pahlavi into Syriac in the sixth century A.D[37]. In the ninth century the Syriac version was translated into Arabic. Between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries a version of the Arabic translation was translated into Ethiopic.[38] Until very recently, it was widely accepted that this Arabic translation was not preserved. Yet Faustina Doufikar-Aerts has recently discovered an Arabic manuscript of Alexander's *Sīrat* in the Aya Sofia collection which dates back to the mid-fifteenth century. Aerts has discovered a series of other similar Arabic manuscripts which can reconstruct the Arabic literary tradition about Alexander.[39]

Rec. ε, originating from the sixth century. is also closely associated with *rec. a* and exists in only one MS.[40]

Rec. λ, created in the late seventh century. follows *rec. β*.[41]

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[32] Magoun, *op.cit.*, 36.
[33] *A Hebrew Alexander Romance,* 14.
[34] Merkelbach, *op. cit.*, 61-74 and 171-179; Ross, *op.cit.*, 6.
[35] *Ps.Call.*, X.
[36] *Historia de Preliis*, ed. O. Zingerle: *Die Quellen zum Alexander des Rudolf von Ems* (Breslau, 1885). 127; D.J.A. Ross, 'A new Manuscript of Archpriest Leo of Naples', *CM,* 20 (1959), 98-158 and S. Gerö, 'The Legend of Alexander the Great in the Christian Orient', *BJRL,* 75 (1993), 5-6.
[37] *Syriac Version.*
[38] Pseudo-Callisthenes, *The Life and Exploits of Alexander the Great: Translations of the Ethiopic Histories of Alexander*, ed. and trans. E. A. Wallis Budge (London, 1896). Also see Magoun, *op.cit.*, 38-39 and Gerö, *op.cit.*, 5; F. Doufikar-Aerts, ' "Les derniers jours d'Alexandre" dans un roman populaire arabe: un miroir du roman syriaque du Pseudo-Callisthène', in L. Harf-Lancner *et al.*, 63.
[39] Eadem, *Alexander Magnus Arabicus*, (Amsterdam, 2003), 174-206, 354; eadem, 'The Marginal Voice of a Popular Romance: Sirat al-Iskandar wa-mā fīhā min al-'ajāyib wa-'l-gharāyib', in *Marginal Voices in Literature and Society*, ed. R. Ostle (Strasbourg, 2000), 14-17, 23.
[40] *A Hebrew Alexander Romance,* 14.
[41] Ibid.

The first edition of *rec. a* was published in 1846 by Müller and is based on only one Greek manuscript [MS Paris, Bibl. Nat. Grec 1711].[42] A critical edition of all the Greek manuscripts of *rec. β* was published by Bergson.[43] The Greek text of the *rec. β* became the basis for the development of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* tradition in the Middle East and the West; many translations of the *Pseudo-Callisthenes* Greek text into other languages contributed to the spread of this tradition worldwide (two Latin, one in Armenian, Syriac, Ethiopic and Hebrew amongst others).[44]

The Greek *rec. β* has been preserved in more than one MS from which only two (B and L) have been edited:

B: MS Paris Gr. 1685[45]

M: MS Messina praeexistens (fondo vecchio) 62.

F: MS Laurentian 70, 37.

K: MS Moscow (The same with version ε)

V: MS Vatican Gr. 1556.

L: MS Leiden Vulc. 93[46]

S: MS Paris. Suppl. 690

Q: MS Bodleian Barocc. 17: fol. 119v-121r.

P: MS Bodleian misc. 283.[47]

The analysed version in this analysis deals with *rec. β* since it is the basis for three other later Greek derivative recensions:

i) the *derivative rec. λ* has been preserved in five MSS (O, W, H, N, P).[48]

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[42] *Pseudo-Callisthenes, primum*, ed. C. Müller (Paris, 1846).
[43] See *Ps.Call.*, n.1.
[44] Ibid., n.16.
[45] *Pseudo-Callisthenes, primum*, ed. Müller.
[46] *Pseudo-Callisthenes*, ed. H. Meusel, *Jahr. f. Klass. Phil.* Suppl.-Bd. V (Leipzig, 1871), 701.
[47] *Ps.Call.*, vi.
[48] O: Cod. Bodleianus Barocc. 23
W: Cod. Vaticanus Gr. 171

ii) the *derivative rec.* ε has many common features with the oldest *rec.* α as well as β. Some fragments of the *derivative rec.* ε have been preserved in *recs.* γ and β.[49]

iii) The *derivative rec.* γ contains supplements from the *derivative rec.* ε.[50]

There are also some manuscripts that contain parts of the tradition of the *rec.* β or its derivatives. MS Athos 4285, MS Iviron 165, fol. 153r-177v includes the text from the *derivative rec.* λ (I.14- III.34). MS Athos 4860, MS Iviron 740, N° 21 includes the dialogue of Alexander with the gymnosophists. The beginning and the end of the code suggest direct relation with the *rec.* γ.[51]

The *rec.* β is preserved in different forms in three MSS: B, K, and V. These contain the oldest material of the *rec.* β. Since, however, the vocabulary of the MS V has undergone many changes, MS B appears as the most reliable for editing purposes. Particularly, as Bergson mentions, the editing of the *rec.* β was not an easy task due to the multiple literary difficulties of the text.[52] The choice of the manuscript for the critical edition was problematic for the editor because of the differences between the three MSS. Bergson selected the MSS B and K and he used MS B, with the contribution of the other MSS.

H: Cod. Bodleianus Holkham 99
N: Cod. Ambrosianus O 117 sup.
P: Cod. Bodleianus misc. 283.

[49] *Ps.Call.*, viii.

[50] U. Von Lauenstein and H. Engelman, *Der Griechischen Alexanderroman, Rezension Γ*, (Meisenheim am Glan, 1962-1963).

[51] *Ps.Call.*, viii.

[52] See introduction to the Ibid., xxv-xxvi.